

MAY 2010

The American Conservative



Will He Blink?

Obama
vs.
Netanyahu

LEFT & RIGHT *Allies Against Empire?*

Paul Buhle ♦ Donald Devine ♦ Robert Dreyfuss ♦ Paul Gottfried ♦ William S. Lind
John Lukacs ♦ Markos Moulitsas ♦ Justin Raimondo ♦ David Rieff ♦ Dave Wagner
John V. Walsh ♦ Stephen Walt ♦ Thomas E. Woods Jr. ♦ Matthew Yglesias

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IDENTITY THEFT

Patrick Deneen's excellent article leads me to a pertinent observation ("Counterfeiting Conservatism," April 2010). I'm one who never got off the ship, so to speak—I took my bearings from Burke and Co. Now I look around and see what Deneen sees. This forces the conclusion that those who now call themselves "conservatives" are guilty of swiping the term and getting away with it.

That leaves me and those of like mind with two alternatives: doing battle over the meaning and character of conservatism in an effort to show that the term is being misapplied or walking away and accepting defeat by abandoning the word "conservatism" for another to describe our outlook and beliefs.

I accept defeat only because I have to. The media has really settled the matter. I now label myself a "traditionalist" or "Burkean conservative." But I can't help but feel anguish over what's transpired. To see a conservatism rooted in Burke and Tocqueville even nominally linked to Palin, Limbaugh, Hannity, et al. is a travesty. No good is going to come of this down the line.

GEORGE CAREY

Washington, D.C.

MEDIA MATTERS

Kelley Vlahos's article is one of the best I've read about Rand or Ron Paul and the underlying traditional, constitutional conservative movement ("Rand Paul Revolution," March 2010). It was well-researched and well-written, with analysis kept as objective as possible.

How far this reporting has come from the unprofessional cut-and-paste articles about Ron Paul during his presidential campaign by cub reporters given the assignment of covering candidates that news directors considered insignificant. (As an aside, the number of reports from the major networks and print media that repeatedly used identical words like "fringe" and "long-shot" to summarily dismiss Paul was truly appalling.)

Now that our expensive, extra-constitutional central government's dominance has begun to collapse and technology is enabling a quasi-1984 system of intrusive surveillance to emerge, Americans are finally realizing that we have neglected to exercise necessary vigilance over our freedoms. The question is, have we waited too long to do something?

DARRYL SCHMITZ

St. Johns, Mich.

FOLLOW THE WMD

The "sexed up" article from Rod Liddle on the Iraq inquiry in Britain is nothing more than conspiracy theory ("While England Sleeps," April 2010). Kick back in your armchair for a moment and meditate on why Bush and Blair would lie the Congress and the Parliament of two of the most wonderful countries on the face of the earth into a needless war. Why do you brush aside the fact that there were some 25 other countries that went into Iraq with us? Were they all misled by two men? Both Bush and Blair have great respect for the military, were not dictators, love their homelands, and could not go to war without the consent of their respective government bodies.

This article is nothing more than a gossip column. It would behoove you to read the intelligence reports. There are thousands of pages, and you can find some pieces that will fit into your "no WMD" theory, but that would only be a small part of the whole story. In the Duelfer Report, for instance, you will learn that Saddam Hussein took very good care of his nuclear engineers, putting them into private-sector positions to keep them away from inspectors. The report further states that Saddam was trying his best to "confuse" the inspectors. It also says it was important to Saddam that his scientists kept up with their knowledge, perhaps sending them to Iran for safekeeping.

Could it be that Bush and Blair did the right thing? It is conspiracy theorists who feed into the hands of the Iranian Propaganda Machine. Enough!

ARLENE FAUL

Fresno, Calif.

GODLESS CONS

I read Theodore Dalrymple's impassioned yet simplistic account of why the West cannot survive unless Westerners accept a religious belief that gives them more than their own lives to value ("Suicide of the West," March 2010). Without faith in a heaven and some transcendent source of value, one becomes merely a rabid consumer or an ideologue of the communist or jihadist sort. I am under the impression that many of those responsible for the content of *The American Conservative* agree that one cannot really be a conservative faithful to the ideals of our liberal Republic and value life, liberty, and property rights without being religious, meaning Christian and perhaps Jewish.

One gets one's values not from some transcendent source or its human interpreters but from culture. One is taught how to think about other humans in the family, at school, and as one works and converses with friends. That powerful sense of the importance of the individual, which lies at the heart of Anglo-American liberal society's emphasis on liberty and property, is not found in any religious book but rather comes from living and participating in the life of one's community.

Even an atheist can hold to ideals necessary to maintain a free society. Even an atheist can be an old-time liberal or a new American conservative.

DENNIS J. TUCHLER

via e-mail

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[POLITICS]

MEDICAL FASCISM

On March 21, Congress passed health-care reform by a seven-vote margin, over the opposition of every Republican in the House and 34 Democrats. Bart Stupak, the antiabortion Democrat from Michigan, was not among the dissenters—his 12th-hour turnabout was critical to passage and elicited a jeer of “baby killer” on the House floor from Texas Rep. Randy Neugebauer. (He says he was referring to the bill, not Stupak.)

Grassroots conservatives immediately clamored for repeal, but don’t count on the GOP to restore the status quo ante. “There is non-controversial stuff here like the pre-existing conditions exclusion and those sorts of things,” said Sen. John Cornyn, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. “We are not interested in repealing that. And that is frankly a distraction.” Repeal would be more than Republicans could accomplish even if they picked up majorities in both chambers of Congress this year—and if they had the will to overturn President Obama’s signal victory to date.

But don’t look at Obamacare as a dream come true for the Left. *In These Times* noted that progressives were sold one product—a “public option,” if not full-bore nationalized healthcare—but received something very different. “First, [Democratic] leaders campaign on pledges to create a government insurer ... that will compete with private health corporations. Once elected, though, Democrats propose simply subsidizing those corporations, which are (not coincidentally) filling Democratic coffers.”

Obamacare does not so much nationalize or socialize healthcare as subject insurers to new regulations—compelling them, for example, to accept customers with pre-existing conditions, which stretches the concept of “insurance” to the breaking point—in exchange for everyone in the country

(except Congress and its staffers) being forced to buy insurance or be hit with fines. This is not classical socialism but a new kind of corporatism or cartelization—one might even say fascism. It’s just as deadly to individual liberty and aggrandizes government power just as much, but is better for insurance companies’ bottom line.

If repeal is too much to hope for from Republicans, there is another alternative. States are furious with new mandates applied to them, and the Tea Parties are boiling over with outrage at the political class of both parties. This is a recipe for nullification or at least the kind of state noncompliance that helped stop Real ID, a program that would have forced states to turn driver’s licenses into de facto national identification cards. The best that might come of this debacle is not a change of power in Washington but a change in the distribution of power between Washington and the states.

[NEOCONS]

AHMAD MADE ME DO IT

Being a neoconservative means never having to say you’re sorry. But Joshua Muravchik recently came close. Over at *World Affairs*’ “Neocon Corner,” the City College alum, former chairman of the Young People’s Socialist League, and AEI fellow—the résumés write themselves—confesses to “one cardinal mistake.” Of course he prefaces his *mea culpa* with the daily affirmation incanted by all *Commentary* contributors in good

standing: “We neoconservatives were proven right about every issue on which we took up cudgels against liberals and paleocons for 25 years.”

Their sole error? Killing thousands of Iraqis and exiling millions so that they could enjoy free elections? Calling for us to rinse and repeat in Iran? Confusing the interests of their own country with another’s? No. The neocon sin was listening to used-country salesman Ahmad Chalabi.

Muravchik explains how he was baited: he gave Chalabi a copy of his book *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America’s Destiny* and was flattered that anybody actually read it. Who wouldn’t take foreign-policy advice from someone with such fine taste in literature?

We all know how that turned out, but Muravchik would prefer not to discuss details—“Never mind all the controversy over bogus WMD.” It’s not that the invasion itself was immoral. Chalabi’s management of the De-Baathification Commission was the real “travesty.” And surely everyone realizes it was that problematic slate Chalabi put together for Iraq’s first election that “got the country’s abhorning democracy off to a troubled beginning.”

So it turns out that the project hasn’t been discredited after all. The neocons just stumbled on some bad advice. There’s no reason to re-evaluate the whole exporting democracy idea—who would buy the book then? Next war, they just need to choose better ex-friends.



[CORRUPTION]

ACORN REPLANTS

James O'Keefe, the activist-with-a-camera who is fast becoming the Right's answer to Michael Moore, has notched his first kill. Last year O'Keefe and accomplice Hannah Giles, decked out as a pimp and his "ho," exposed the left-wing community organizers at ACORN—the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now—as willing to abet tax evasion and other crimes. Its once mighty name tarnished, ACORN now says it will all but disband by April 1, closing its state offices and affiliates, with the national headquarters to follow soon after.

ACORN had weathered the storm generated by O'Keefe rather well, except in the court of public opinion. Criminal charges against the group's employees have been dropped, and courts overturned a law that stripped ACORN of federal funds. The outfit's defenders argue that the videos, dubbed and edited, tell less than the whole truth.

But that has not dislodged the impression that ACORN is a scam—one that will now simply trade under another name. ACORN's New York affiliate has christened itself New York Communities for Change; California's is the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment. ACORN Housing becomes the Affordable Housing Centers of America.

Pimps and prostitutes get attention, but the serious side of ACORN is what it contributed to the financial crisis by bullying banks into giving mortgages to uncreditworthy applicants and the corruption the group has fostered with dubious voter-registration drives. "Mickey Mouse" was just one of the disenfranchised whose participation in the electoral process ACORN is said to have facilitated. ACORN will continue its antics under a new brand—and will no doubt be warier in future of johns with camera phones.

[WAR]

COPS & ROBBERS

The only good news about the Afghan police force we're training is that there's no need to worry about them using those shiny new AK-47s to drive out our occupying Army. They aren't good enough shots.

Eight years and \$6 billion later, "We are at zero," Captain Mohammad Moqim tells *Newsweek*. "They don't listen, are undisciplined, and will never be real policemen." Yet the Obama administration's plan to exit by July 2011 rests on their thin shoulders.

At present, just 12 percent of Afghanistan's police units are able to operate without assistance. Worse, the locals don't trust them. Afghan cops have been implicated in drug running, rape, assault, and corruption schemes. Many are said to be supplying ammunition to the Taliban.

Part of the problem is recruitment: just about anyone who volunteers is given a uniform and a weapon. Most are war-tossed villagers with no other prospects. Nearly 90 percent are illiterate.

The few who receive any training at all are put through an eight-week program run by U.S. contractor DynCorp, which has banked \$1.7 billion for its trouble. Almost everyone graduates, but a majority just take their guns and run. Of the 170,000 Afghans the United States has paid to train, only 30,000 are still on the job.

By October, the plan is to have 109,000 fully functioning Afghan police. Since the broken Karzai government can't possibly support a force of that size, the U.S. will be footing the bill in perpetuity. But if passing out sheriff stars to a bunch of shepherds gives us temporary cover to come home, we'd do better to take that deal than wait around for them to become sharpshooters. ■

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[this land is whose land?]

Normalizing Relations

President Obama's speeches signal a desire to treat Israel like any other country. Now events have converged to test his resolve.

By Scott McConnell

PRESIDENT OBAMA has probably studied the first President Bush's standoff with Israel. Then as now, the issue of contention was Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank and Jerusalem. George H.W. Bush was hopeful about moving toward a comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians. In the last days of the Reagan presidency, the Palestine Liberation Organization had finally laid down the only significant diplomatic card in its possession, accepting UN Resolutions 242 and 338, recognizing Israel's right to exist within its 1967 borders and limiting its aspirations to a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. In May 1989, Secretary of State James Baker addressed AIPAC's annual Washington conference. After praising Israel's commitment to democracy and role as a strategic partner, Baker went on to say, "Now is the time to lay aside, once and for all, the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel. ... For-swear annexation. Stop settlement activity. Allow schools to reopen. Reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights."

AIPAC's delegates gave Baker a chilly reception. Relations between Israel's Likud Party Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and President Bush were frosty as well. Bush believed Shamir had lied to him about settlements in East

Jerusalem, which the United States (and every other country) considered occupied territory. The embryonic peace process stalled.

But after driving Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, Bush and Baker returned to the Palestine issue. In May 1991, Israel asked the administration for a \$10 billion loan guarantee. The funds were to be used to settle immigrants from the former Soviet Union. At the time, Israel was building settlements at breakneck pace, and Baker and Bush both labeled them an obstacle to peace. Shamir was confident Israel's clout in Congress would force the president to relent and turn over the money. Bush worked to ensure no funds could be used for construction beyond Israel's 1967 borders. When AIPAC held an "education day" in Congress to press for the loans with no strings attached, Bush went public with a denunciation, depicting himself as "one lonely little guy" battling thousands of lobbyists. Some American Jews were bothered by the language, but the country was supportive, backing the president by two- and three-to-one margins. Bush stuck to his guns through the following summer, when Israeli voters tossed out Likud and elected Yitzhak Rabin's Labor Party by a decisive margin. He then released the loan guarantees. The peace process, which came

tantalizingly close to producing a two-states-for-two-peoples agreement by the end of Bill Clinton's presidency, would begin.

A principal lesson is that an American president can prevail in a showdown with Israel over settlements. But the Bush-Shamir dispute also highlights the centrality of the settlement issue. Pro-Israel commentators have gone into overdrive apologizing for Israel's "gaffe" of announcing that 1,600 new homes for Jews would be built in East Jerusalem while Vice President Joe Biden was visiting the country. Bibi Netanyahu decried this "regrettable incident, done in all innocence, which was hurtful and certainly should not have occurred." (The "hurtful" part is especially rich, as if the injury was to Biden's self-esteem and not to America's national interest.)

But, of course, the issue is one of substance, not timing, just as it was in 1991. It can be difficult for outsiders to grasp what is at stake in these seemingly endless battles over the building of neighborhoods in a few contested acres. But the 22 percent of Palestine that remained for the Palestinians after the 1948 armistice has, since 1967, been sliced and diced by Israeli settlements, by roads connecting the settlements to one another and to Israel proper, and by checkpoints and roadblocks designed to

hinder Palestinian commerce and normal life. Israel's East Jerusalem settlements supplement a policy of slow-motion bureaucratic population removal—Palestinians are routinely denied residency permits, permission to live with a spouse, authorization to build. Palestinians in Bethlehem have a difficult time visiting a Jerusalem-based doctor or lawyer or parent ten minutes away. Quite apart from its sacred status to Islam, Jerusalem is the center of bourgeois Palestinian life, a place where the majority of professional families have their roots. A Palestinian state without a capital in East Jerusalem is as much an absurdity as a Jerusalem stripped of an official Jewish presence.

In recent months, the battle of neighborhoods has been intensifying. In January, an Israeli court evicted several Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, another East Jerusalem Arab neighborhood, and Jewish settlers were moved in. Thousands of Arabs and Jews have marched together in weekly demonstrations to protest this ethnic cleansing by housing court. Likewise, there have been regular demonstrations in Bil'in, where the route of Israel's "separation wall" severs the Arab village from its farmland. Settlement-building has been incessant; 10 percent of Israelis now live in the occupied territories, four times the number that did so in 1993.

But if new settlements with their roads and checkpoints and the separation wall have transformed the physical geography of the West Bank since the first George Bush confronted Shamir, the moral geography of the region and how it is perceived in the United States may be changing more rapidly—and not in Israel's favor.

One of the most interesting developments—not to my knowledge ever quantified—is the dramatic growth in the number of Americans who have become well-informed about Israel from a criti-

cal perspective. This group, far too diffuse to be called a coalition, includes some anti-Zionists, but its vast majority favors a two-state solution. It is composed of Christians and Jews and an increasing number of Muslims. It includes congressmen who tour the region under non-Israeli auspices, young people who volunteer on the West Bank, a talented coterie of bloggers, and a proliferation of Jewish peace groups, stretching from the establishment-oriented J Street leftward. Whereas informed skepticism about Israeli claims was once limited largely to American diplomats who served in the region, today its base may be ten times larger. For the first time in U.S. history, the pro-Palestinian side has a competitive voice in the public discourse—far smaller than the Israel lobby's but growing every day.

In December 2008, Israel initiated a war against the Palestinian population of Gaza, then under the rule of Hamas. For over a year prior, there had been an uneasy but viable ceasefire, which Israel broke with some "targeted killings" in November. Hamas responded with rocket fire. Gaza was without serious military defense during the three-week campaign, and the IDF had its way, killing 1,400 Palestinians, using white phosphorous against civilian targets, and destroying much of Gaza's infrastructure while suffering a handful of casualties. Several American congressmen who visited Gaza in the weeks after were appalled at the destruction and disturbed by Israel's use of American weaponry to carry it out.

Shortly thereafter, Judge Richard Goldstone was named by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate Israeli and Hamas actions during the Gaza war. A highly accomplished international jurist, Goldstone has been described as nothing less than an archetype of Jewish liberalism, a believer in

the rule of law and in human rights, a Zionist with a daughter living in Israel. His scathing report about Israeli conduct in the war opened up the possibility that the war's initiators, the leaders of Israel's centrist Kadima Party, could be arrested and charged with war crimes if they traveled abroad. The United States used its power in the UN to constrain the writ of the report, but in public-relations terms, the stain on Israel was there for the world to see.

At the same time, Israel began to be increasingly linked in the public mind with the term "apartheid." Jimmy Carter used it in his bestselling book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. In interviews, he explained carefully that Israel itself was not an apartheid state, and Palestinian Arabs living in Israel proper possessed civil rights. But for 40 years, Israel has been ruling over Arabs on the West Bank, and the growth of settlements and Jews-only roads and checkpoints has created a de facto apartheid system. Some Israeli leaders have used the term to warn of their country's fate in the absence of a two-state solution. And indeed there are parts of Israel now visible to anyone with Internet access that resemble South African apartheid conditions or worse. The *New York Times* website recently posted a video of Israeli settlers, newly moved into an Arab neighborhood in East Jerusalem, singing songs in praise of the mass murderer Baruch Goldstein. It is hard to know how much such scenes have altered American perceptions, but clearly the racist settlers are a world away from the "Exodus" performances of Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint.

A milestone in this shifting moral climate was the face-off between Andrew Sullivan and Leon Wieseltier. Gay, Catholic, and eclectically conservative, Sullivan is an extremely popular political blogger. Combining moral seriousness and whimsy, he manages to post on

dozens of topics every day. After initially supporting the Iraq War, he revised his view and in the last few years has become increasingly critical of Israel and occasionally of the role of the Israel lobby. Leon Wieseltier—the longtime literary editor of *The New Republic* and Sullivan’s colleague when the latter edited the magazine in the early 1990s—is known for prose drizzled with displays of philosophical erudition and is author of the award-winning book *Kaddish*, an exploration of Jewish liturgy.

Generally centrist, Wieseltier is a staunch defender of Israel. “We’re the cops,” he once said of his magazine’s role in policing the Washington debate on the Mideast. In February, Wieseltier posted a long essay accusing Sullivan of displaying “venomous hostility toward Israel and the Jews.” The “rants” Wieseltier cited in evidence were in the main Sullivan’s expressive critiques of Israeli policies—the “pulverization of Gaza,” the “daily grinding of Palestinians on the West Bank”—and the assertion that “standing up to Netanyahu’s provocations” would help the U.S. “advance its interests in the region and the world.”

What happened next invites a point of comparison. In the mid ’80s, the editor of *Commentary*, Norman Podhoretz, launched a campaign against Joe Sobran, then a senior editor at *National Review*. Sobran was a less judicious and far more reactionary writer than Sullivan, but there was nonetheless a fair degree of overlap between what he was writing about Israel then and what Sullivan is writing now. Under pressure from Podhoretz, *NR* founder William F. Buckley wrote an editorial affirming that “the structure of prevailing taboos respecting Israel ... is welcome” and that Sobran, in full “knowledge of the reigning protocols,” had transgressed them, giving rise to “suspicions of anti-Semitism.” *NR* henceforth disassociated itself from Sobran’s syndicated columns.

This was the first step along the way to the severance of Sobran from the magazine. Outside the *National Review* orbit, Sobran’s career unraveled. Apart from a few paleoconservatives, few took time to lament the hit.

In Sullivan’s case, almost the opposite occurred. Much of the liberal blogosphere rose to his defense. Wieseltier was widely mocked, most effectively perhaps by Matthew Yglesias, who observed that a former Bolshevik minister of justice had said that “execution of the innocent will impress the masses even more” than execution of the guilty. Yglesias added, “flinging baseless charges of anti-semitism is the essence of [*The New Republic*’s] commentary on Israel.” In the Washington intellectual blogosphere at least, the “structure of prevailing taboos” concerning Israel had eroded nearly out of existence.

The newest and potentially most decisive development in this American conversation about Israel, the settlements, and the Palestinians arose, by chance or design, at almost precisely the moment that the vice president and secretary of state were denouncing Israel’s settlement policy. Mark Perry reported in *Foreign Policy* that Gen. David Petraeus of Central Command had dispatched a team of officers last year to the Middle East to take a reading of America’s position. In January, they reported to the Joint Chiefs that the conduct of Israel toward the Palestinians was causing Muslims throughout the region to conclude that the administration was weak. The message was delivered in dramatic terms and reportedly shocked the White House. Petraeus reiterated the finding in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee: “The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment. ... Arab anger over the Palestinian ques-

tion limits the strength and depth of US partnerships with government and people in [the region].”

Such analysis is hardly new: one could have heard variations on it from almost any American Mideast specialist over the past 40 years. But it has usually been discounted by political Washington, a murmur from the foreign-affairs bureaucracy that could be ignored.

But Petraeus is no mid-level Arabist or anonymous retired general. He is the military’s best-known commander, admired for apparently turning around the conflict in Iraq and touted by conservatives as a potential president. While his statements were a frontal challenge to the Israel lobby’s claims that America’s and Israel’s interests are identical, his stature seemed to render him immune to the defamation typically showered on those making this argument.

The Petraeus intervention may prove a case study in the role of unintended consequences in history. Both he and Vice President Biden stressed the increased danger American troops now face because of perceptions that the U.S. is anti-Muslim and weak because of its deference to Israel. Ironically, it was in great part because of Israel and its American lobby that U.S. soldiers were in this position to begin with. A parade of Israeli leaders had professed to American audiences that Saddam Hussein was the new Hitler whom the United States had to take out, and it is well documented that pro-Israel voices within the administration worked relentlessly to ignite the Iraq War. Of course, Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld had to be inclined to listen to them. But as Stephen Walt has pointed out, it is inconceivable that the United States would have attacked Iraq had Israel and its American friends argued against such an invasion.

And so the United States is now there, and the security of its troops depends considerably on cooperation with Arab

friends and the effective neutralization of those less friendly. As a society, the United States is thus much more engaged with Arab perceptions than it was before March 2003. The patronizing generalizations of Israeli Orientalism about the “Arab mind” have lost much of their cachet in Washington, as the United States has had to expand its base of specialists to deal with the Arab world. A fair number are in the military and report to General Petraeus.

The result is that two streams of anti-settlement, pro-peace-process discourse have begun to merge and reinforce one another. The realist argument about Israel—which can be traced from President Truman’s secretary of state George Marshall through Kennedy and Johnson aide George Ball to Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer—now appears to have the patronage of America’s most respected military commander. The pretense that America’s and Israel’s interests in the Middle East coincide completely is being challenged at the highest level and may never recover.

At the same time, the humanitarian argument, rooted in observation of Israeli oppression and Palestinian suffering, is disseminated more widely than ever. It reaches Americans through the Internet, through congressional visits, through the work of Israeli peace and human-rights monitoring groups, through the burgeoning communities of international solidarity workers, through church groups, through Richard Goldstone. Expressions of unconditional solidarity with Israel—such as Joseph Lieberman’s claim that we must not quarrel in public because Israel is “family”—are of course as common as ever. But they often give off the musty scent of Soviet bloc boilerplate in the 1970s and ’80s—words that many recite ritualistically but fewer and fewer say with conviction.

A gap in the line has been opened, but no one yet knows whether Obama will

push through it. Chas Freeman, the veteran diplomat whose appointment to chair the National Intelligence Council was scuttled by objections from Israel lobbyists, says, “The president gets it”—that his appreciation of the centrality of these issues was manifest in his Ankara and Cairo speeches. Freeman views the showdown as an historic juncture: “the first time anything resembling an assault on an entrenched interest that many have recognized is contrary to American interests” has taken place. The moment has the potential to unite “Obama as the commander in chief with the visionary who spoke in Cairo.” But Obama’s track record is not reassuring, Freeman admits. He notes that the president has a “pattern of laying out a sensible strategic doctrine followed by delegating its implementation to people who may work to subvert it or who have their own agendas.”

THE PRETENSE THAT AMERICA’S AND ISRAEL’S INTERESTS COINCIDE COMPLETELY IS BEING CHALLENGED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL AND MAY NEVER RECOVER.

Progress does not seem possible with the current Netanyahu government. But Israeli governing coalitions last, on average, 18 months, and some fall more quickly. (Netanyahu was sworn in a year ago.) George H. W. Bush had the leverage of Israel’s extraordinary request for a \$10 billion loan guarantee, which Obama lacks. But there are many steps short of a cut-off of American aid that the administration could use to prod Israelis toward the two-state solution the majority of them say they want.

Biden and Clinton’s condemnations of East Jerusalem settlement-building were a start. The U.S. could choose not to veto a UN resolution condemning the occupation. It could suspend or downgrade military or intelligence cooperation with Israel as Ronald Reagan did

after the invasion of Lebanon. It could end tax deductions for U.S.-based organizations that fund settlements.

In a broader sociological sense, the United States and Israel are plainly moving in different directions: America has been striving to become less racist and is inexorably becoming more multicultural. So are all the Western democracies. Israel, founded on the idea that Jews, like other peoples, should have their “own” state, is animated by an ethnonationalism that seems, in the Western world at least, increasingly anachronistic. Meanwhile, Israeli racism is on the upswing. I know no one on the Israeli Right who has proffered a suggestion for what Israel might do with the Palestinians in the absence of a two-state solution: the choices would seem to be either to grant them democratic rights in what would then become a binational state or solidify the current West Bank apartheid

and rule over a growing Arab population while denying it equal rights.

The moment for decisive action is seldom obvious, but the first polls could hardly be more favorable to Obama: there is roughly a 50-50 split in Israel over whether settlement-construction in Jerusalem should be stopped, and Americans approve Obama’s position on the settlements by nearly a 5-2 margin (likely more than their approval of any other presidential initiative). With the Biden trip and the Petraeus report, the Obama administration has crossed its Rubicon in dealing with Israel. What remains to be seen is whether the president recognizes this. ■

Scott McConnell is editor at large of The American Conservative.

Out From the Shadows

AIPAC confronts its worst fear: daylight.

By Philip Weiss

IN THAT RADICAL HANDBOOK on the workings of American society, the Wizard of Oz never recovered once Dorothy pulled back the curtain of her own innocence. One would like to believe that AIPAC will never recover from a brutal spring that has exposed its real interests to the American public. Even supporters of the Jewish state have criticized the American Israel Public Affairs Committee for fully taking Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's side in his battle with Barack Obama over settlements, and during its recent annual conference, the lobby looked wobbly and defensive.

Yes, there was the usual procession of weak-kneed politicians professing love for Israel, not to mention AIPAC board members explaining how they cultivate "relationships" with the powerful. Yes, Sen. Chuck Schumer gave a bloodcurdling yowl, *Am Yisroel Chai*—the Jewish people live!—as he pledged to be Israel's guardian. But a large shift in American policy and opinion has left the lead institution of the lobby exposed, and worse, mocked.

AIPAC was taking on water before its VIP-studded conference began in late March. Important supporters of Israel in the media, including Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic* and David Remnick of *The New Yorker*, questioned whether reflexive support for Israel's right-wing policies served the American interest, echoing the view of Gen. David Petraeus that the Palestinian problem is our problem in the battle for hearts and minds in the Middle East.

AIPAC designed its conference to defeat this understanding in Washington. Still it crept in and panicked the faithful. Alan Dershowitz and executive director Howard Kohr gave fiery speeches that sought to puncture the new conventional wisdom. It is "bigoted" to suggest that Israel is hurting the U.S. in the Middle East, Dershowitz said; the Arabs hate us because they hate freedom. With his usual precision, he bragged, "Israel's high technology accomplishments exceed those of all of Europe and most of Asia." Kohr, too, retailed Israel's techno achievements, before saying that it is "specious, insidious," and "dangerous" for anyone to make the "reductivist" argument that the "relationship between the United States and Israel rests on resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians."

But a few minutes later, Hillary Clinton said that everywhere she goes in the world, leaders of foreign countries bring up the Israel/Palestine issue as one of the top three problems affecting them. So much for anti-reductivism. She said firmly that Israel must stop building settlements and honor Palestinian "aspirations" for Jerusalem. Christian ones, too, for that matter.

The scholar who put the lobby on the map with a famous paper four years ago says that everyone is now seeing the divergence between American and Israeli interests. John Mearsheimer wrote in an e-mail, "Listening to the speeches at the AIPAC conference—especially Alan Dershowitz's—I had the sense that the hardliners in the lobby are

getting desperate because they recognize that more and more Americans are coming to understand that Israel is a strategic liability for the United States. Plus there is the not so small matter that Israel is turning itself into an apartheid state, and more and more people are seeing that, too."

AIPAC's doctrinaire inability to say boo in favor of Obama's efforts to bring about Palestinian self-determination was mocked to wide laughter on the second day of the conference, when the antiwar group Code Pink released a hoax press release saying that AIPAC had called for an immediate freeze on settlements. Several news organizations, including C-SPAN and Al Jazeera, promptly put the "news" up on the screen, surely because it seemed a shrewd political step for an organization seeking influence in Obama's Washington. Minutes later, the hoax was admitted, exposing AIPAC's willing puppetry for a foreign government, an act climaxed that night when Netanyahu himself repeated the talking point that two AIPAC executives had uttered from the podium before him: "Jerusalem is not a settlement."

The other talking point AIPAC pushed was the criticism that Obama should never have publicly quarreled with Israel because open disagreement gives ammunition to our enemies, who are trying to undermine the Jewish state. "Allies should work out their differences privately," explained Lee Rosenberg, the incoming president of AIPAC who is, what a coincidence, a former member of Obama's finance committee.

This is not something you will find in the *Federalist Papers*, which say that policy must be formed by open and robust debate. Indeed, the repeated suggestion that a foreign government ought to wield its influence behind closed doors—not to mention the repeated appearance of Israeli soldiers in uniform at the podium, when there was nary an American uniform in sight—only added to the methane in the atmosphere.

“This could be a moment of waking up and wisdom,” says Stephen P. Cohen, author of the recently published *Beyond America’s Grasp: a Century of Failed American Diplomacy in the Middle East*.

The long silence toward Israeli settlements that has been the policy of American Jewish leadership is no longer fully sustainable. It’s a failure of courage of our leadership that we have not recognized our responsibility to be a primary supporter of an American foreign policy that has been advocated now by both Republican and Democratic presidencies going back to George H.W. Bush. ... Israel is putting itself at risk, and the United States.

This is not to say that the Israel lobby will not win on the issue it most cares about: the happy work of applying “crippling” sanctions to Iran, followed no doubt by U.S. military action. Scores of congressmen were on hand to affirm that position in public letters to the president, as were Senators Schumer, Lindsey Graham, and Evan Bayh and Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Speakers routinely invoked the murder of Jews in the Holocaust before describing Iran’s nuclear plans as an “existential” threat to Israel and the Jewish people—notwithstanding the fact that Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, sitting at a front table, has said specifically that an Iranian bomb is not an existential threat to Israel.

But the political capital the lobby will need for the Iran battle has clearly been damaged by a public spectacle that it has worked to prevent for 50 years: daylight between the U.S. government and the Israeli government. The growing awareness that the two countries’ interests diverge, and that AIPAC will stick with Israel, has surely hurt the lobby’s claim to be an American organization. The special bond between the countries is unbreakable and forever, its leaders insisted. But the conference-goers weren’t heartened.

“The mood is one of fear over the rift with the administration. People here feel they are less and less appreciated by the U.S. government. This is a frightening time for them,” says Medea Benjamin, leader of Code Pink. “They feel that Israel’s allies are shrinking, the press is pro-Palestinian. Nobody understands Israel, and this administration is pro-Palestinian. And we’ve got to protect ourselves, and building settlements is part of what keeps Israel alive.”

Despair was evident. The theme of the conference, “Israel, Tell the Story,” was an effort to stop the bleeding. Even Howard Kohr warned that the lobbyists are internalizing this message. “The pro-Israel community [must] go on the offense in demanding fair treatment for Israel,” he said. “The first thing we must do is break free of our own doubts.”

But who can maintain such blinders? An Arab American Institute poll released the day Netanyahu spoke says that only 42 percent of American Democrats have a favorable view of Israel. Former Israeli aide Tal Becker warned the conference that without some offerings to Obama, the lobby is likely to lose influence over policy. Hillary Clinton implored the conference to understand that the “status quo is unsustainable.” The special relationship is suddenly embarrassing. As Cohen says, blind American allegiance to Israeli policy toward the Palestinians is making us look like a “paper tiger” in China’s eyes.

Mearsheimer says that the spell has been broken among well-informed Americans: “AIPAC will surely remain a powerful lobbying organization in the short term, but it is hard to see how it can maintain its present level of influence over the long term. Not only is it trying to sell flawed merchandise—the special relationship—but it now operates out in the open in ways that can only reduce its effectiveness.”

Ironically, he now believes less in the lobby’s power than the lobby itself. When Netanyahu dares to defy U.S. policy on the settlements and his American hosts give him standing ovations, they are all betting that Israel’s friends in Congress and the media will be able to defy presidential policy as in days past. It’s a reasonable bet. The lockstep of Schumer and Howard Berman and Henry Waxman and other so-called liberals on AIPAC’s Iran agenda reminds us that the Jewish establishment is committed to the Jewish claim to an undivided Jerusalem and is mixed on giving up land in the West Bank. Even J Street, the alternative Israel lobby, which boldly supported Obama against Netanyahu, has been lukewarm in its criticism of Israel’s colonization project.

What about the bet on Obama? “Everyone in this city is wondering that,” says Matt Duss of the Center for American Progress. “He played a successful long game with healthcare. Is he going to make clear what American interests are?”

The bad news from AIPAC is that the Jewish community is so wedded to Jim Crow in Palestine that it won’t offer Obama much support. That is quite a comedown for an American group long associated with freethinking and minority rights. But the good news is that this Jewish tragedy doesn’t have to be an American one. ■

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Left & Right: Prospects for Peace

A YEAR INTO THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION, American foreign policy has yet to experience the change for which many progressives—and some conservatives—hoped. Even as U.S. forces remain mired in Iraq, the president has committed more troops to Afghanistan and escalated incursions into Pakistan. He prosecutes the war on terror at home and abroad in much the same manner as his predecessor, and militarism continues to find support on both sides of the partisan divide.

Must effective opposition to war and empire also cross ideological lines? It often has. The Anti-Imperialist League, founded in 1898, brought progressives such as Jane Addams together with conservatives and classical liberals such as William Dean Howells and Oswald Garrison Villard. In the 1960s, libertarians Murray Rothbard and Leonardiggio attempted a similarly ecumenical effort with their journal *Left and Right*, though opposition to the Vietnam War remained almost wholly left-wing.

Today, men of the Right such as Andrew Bacevich and Bill Kauffman publish volumes in the American Empire Project edited by progressives Tom Englehardt and Steve Fraser, while antiwar left-wingers such as Norman Mailer and Ralph Nader appear in the pages of *TAC*. A new Left-Right coalition called Come Home, America recently met in Washington, D.C. With memories of Bush's militarism fresh in the minds of the Left and the reality of Obama's warmongering spurring on the noninterventionist Right, is this the moment for all enemies of empire to come together?

We invited thinkers from across the spectrum to address that question and related ones such as: What obstacles stand in the way of cooperation between progressives and conservatives? Why have earlier antiwar attempts failed? And is it enough to oppose war and imperialism, or must a successful alliance have a positive vision as well?

William S. Lind Several years ago, I remarked over lunch to the Third Secretary of the Russian Embassy that America is now a one-party country. He replied, "Yes, it's quite obvious." Russians know what one-party states look like.

America's one party is the Establishment Party, which is also the War Party. Why is it for war? In part, ideology—the third great totalizing ideology of the 20th century, "democratic capitalism." In part, hubris. And in part, because war is a racket that pays well—if you are a member of the Establishment.

Its power is almost beyond challenge, at least until folly lays it low. That may be coming soon. In the meantime, one of the few things that gets its attention is a Left-Right anti-Establishment coalition. Left or Right alone is easy to deal with, but on the rare occasions when they team up, the problem becomes a bit tricky. The bogeyman caricatures that normally stop each are nullified by the presence of their opposites.

What if Left and Right teamed up to end wars of choice and the American Empire they seek to build, perhaps in time to prevent national bankruptcy? Alone, the Left's opposition to war and the Right's demands for fiscal prudence are going nowhere. Joining forces would seem to be worth a shot.

The obstacles are not trivial. The first is the Left's ideology of cultural Marxism, aka political correctness. Its purpose is to poison Western culture, the preservation and restoration of which is conservatives' primary goal. Yet from the Left's perspective, anyone who defies the Frankfurt School's spew is evil incarnate, another Hitler.

Both camps also face serious internal obstacles. President Obama is proving to be a better front man for the war and empire crowd than Bush, but how can the Left get its people to go after a Democrat and America's First Black President? Conservatives could not convince their grassroots to break with Bush when he blew the budget, and he was just a Republican, not an icon.

On the Right, how do conservatives opposed to war, empire, and ruin get a hearing amidst the din of neocon howls? Far more conservatives listen to Rush and watch Fox than read *The American Conservative*. Ron Paul's win in the CPAC straw poll suggests the neocons' lock may be weakening; the conservative activists who voted for him had to accept his anti-empire position, even if it was not the motivation for their votes. But reaching the grassroots with the message is a challenge.

Assuming Left and Right attempt to form a coalition, language is likely to be a problem. Words that remind conservatives of the antiwar movement of the 1960s—"peace," "anti-imperialism," "anti-militarism"—are nonstarters.

All that said, neither Left nor Right has anything to lose by exploring a coalition because alone neither is having an impact. Afghanistan and tomorrow Iran, Yemen, and Somalia, etc. Eventually the combination of military and financial overextension will bring the roof down. It always has. But at that point, it will be helpful to have a thought-out alternative on the table, one that has activists, money, and votes behind it.

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Paul Buhle & Dave Wagner

The separation between Right and Left is so long-standing and appears so vast that only contemporary crises on the scale of the last century's two world wars could prepare the conditions for a new coalescence.

We've arrived at that moment for the first time in generations, now compelled by the failure of the long war to establish control of south Asian resources. Recent reports that General Petraeus has asked the Joint Chiefs to declare the West Bank and Gaza part of his area of operations because the occupation threatens to pull down his entire enterprise is the symbolic capstone on the long process of militarizing all U.S. foreign policy. We are at the point when victory will be defined as the British did after World War II, with an empire in decline and soldiers returning to an economy hollowed out by a financial sector that pockets 40 cents of every dollar of profit. Nor is there any prospect for improvement.

Meanwhile, antiwar activists on the Right as well as the Left are isolated by their respective national parties, as ideology itself has been marginalized. Yet the irony may be that this marginalization will open an opportunity for dialogue between Right and Left and even for common action against the war.

If it helps thaw the frozen language of protest, long discounted by the official organs of opinion and contained by a militarized constabulary, it's a worthwhile risk. There are few other hopes for confronting the war-drunk leadership of Republicans and Democrats alike.

PAUL BUHLE is a retired former senior lecturer at Brown University, author or editor of 35 books, and founding editor of *Radical America*. **DAVE WAGNER** is a retired journalist for the *Arizona Republic*, among other newspapers.

Paul Gottfried I have no hope for any alliance between the antiwar Right and any significant leftist force. Individual liberals may establish informal relations with self-identified conservatives, but one should avoid generalizing from this observation. Individual libertarians, like Bill Kauffman and Justin Raimondo, may get on well with maverick leftists Alexander Cockburn and Gore Vidal. But this does not foreshadow larger trends. During the Bush administration, the antiwar Right struggled to connect with leftist opponents of the war, and they received hardly any attention from their would-be partners in organizing antiwar activity.

The reasons for this non-recognition seem self-evident. First, the Left has no interest in being allied to social reactionaries by becoming identified with the antiwar Right. The Left is happier to deal with "conservatives" like David Frum and David Brooks, with whom they agree on most social issues, even if they

remain apart on foreign policy. For those who consider gay marriage, unrestricted abortion, and special rights for minorities to be paramount issues, having Catholic traditionalists or paleolibertarians as allies is not a genuine strategic option.

Second, there is no recognizable advantage for the Left to be allied to marginalized people on the Right. As long as neoconservatives control the media and financial resources of the conservative movement, no one, except for hopelessly deluded antiwar rightists, would consider an alliance with our side to be a political coup. Unless the antiwar Right can push itself into public attention and counteract the neoconservative-fashioned image of "conservatives," the Left can have no practical interest in reaching across the ideological chasm.

Finally, unlike the antiwar Right, which has suffered grievously for its principled stand, most of the Left's opposition to the war against terror was mere posturing. It was a means to get a Democrat elected president and to be able to advance a leftist social agenda. The noisy opposition to Bush's war on terror turned into a whisper as soon as a black leftist president was put in charge of it. Liberals are much less concerned than the antiwar Right about how executive power is exercised. They have no problem with left-wing dictatorships that engage in massive social reform. What they object to is having politicians whom they don't regard as leftists exercising power. Once Obama and his crew took over the ship of state, for most of the Left, opposition to the war ceased to matter.

PAUL GOTTFRIED is *Raffensperger Professor of Humanities at Elizabethtown College and author of Conservatism in America, among other works.*

Stephen Walt The election of Barack Obama did not produce a significant change in American foreign policy or grand strategy. Obama's style and tone are different, and he deserves credit for halting immoral excesses like waterboarding. But he has continued most of the Bush administration's other counterterrorism policies, will keep thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq after 2011, and has escalated U.S. involvement in Central Asia. He's beaten a hasty retreat from his attempt to get Israel to stop building settlements, and his policy toward Iran looks more like Bush's every week. Despite a sluggish economy, soaring deficits, deep fiscal problems at the state and local level, and the need to rebuild America's crumbling infrastructure, military spending continues to rise. Instead of "change we can believe in," Obama has thus far given us more of the same.

One reason for this consistency is America's continued global primacy. The U.S. is still the world's foremost economic and military power. And when you're the 800-pound gorilla, it's hard to imagine that there are things you can't do.

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Another explanation for America's continued global activism is the imbalance of power between organized interests that constantly push for greater involvement and the far weaker groups who favor restraint. American liberal internationalism didn't just arise spontaneously as U.S. power grew; it was nurtured by groups like the Council on Foreign Relations, which was created to overcome isolationist sentiments. There are also civic action groups like the Foreign Policy Association, the World Affairs Councils, or the United Nations Association, as well as influential think tanks like the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Center for a New American Security.

Washington is also home to numerous special interests with their own international agendas. Whether the issue is Cuba, Darfur, the Middle East, Armenia, arms control, trade, human rights, or climate policy, there is bound to be some well-funded group pressing Washington to focus more energy and attention on its particular pet issue.

Add it all up, and we have a foreign-policy establishment that constantly looks for problems to solve, even when U.S. vital interests are not concerned and when we have no idea how to fix the problems at hand. Nor does it matter which party is in power; when it comes to foreign policy, we increasingly have a one-party system of in-and-outers, endlessly circulating between government and these various supporting institutions.

America's persistent over-engagement in the world is due to two imbalances of power, not just one. The first is the gap between U.S. capabilities and everyone else's, which encourages the United States to do too much and allows others to do too little. The second imbalance is between organized interests whose core mission is pushing the U.S. to do more in more places and the less influential groups who think we might be better off doing less.

STEPHEN WALT is professor of international affairs at Harvard University and author, with John Mearsheimer, of *The Israel Lobby*.

Matthew Yglesias Advocates of a more restrained American foreign policy have not had a good couple of decades. On the Right, the neoconservative faction appears more dominant than ever, notwithstanding the terrible consequences of their approach during the Bush years. On the Left, the Barack Obama of the primary campaign who said, "I don't want to just end the war, I want to end the mindset that got us into war in the first place" has transformed into a president who offers mostly incremental change—a more prudently managed ver-

sion of the same hegemonic aspirations that have governed the United States since the end of the Cold War. But in the nation's looming budgetary crisis, critics of this mindset will soon find an opportunity.

Integral to the dominant approach of recent decades has been the firm principle that nobody should have to pay any price for the upkeep of our military posture. Taxpayers are insulated from costs by the bipartisan consensus that military spending should be exempt from both formal budgetary constraint and the kind of political scrutiny given to other kinds of spending.

In normal times, such conduct might have been expected to produce a debt crisis. But the People's Republic of China has decided that it serves China's interests to engage in massive purchases of foreign currencies in order to keep its currency cheap and its volume of exports high. This is a shaky basis for global military hegemony, and all signs are that it won't last long.

Soon enough, interest rates will begin to rise and the retirement of the Baby Boomers will begin to weigh heavily on the budget. At that point, the political basis of America's national security posture will become untenable. It's not so much that we won't be able to afford the kind of defense spending we have today as that it won't be possible for the military-industrial complex to avoid having its funding priorities put into direct competition with other claims on tax dollars. And here is where advocates of a new approach must make our mark felt—by insisting that reformulating our "defense" policy more narrowly around the goal of defending the country is far and away the most appealing avenue available for closing the gap between revenues and expenditures.

MATTHEW YGLESIAS is a fellow at the Center for American Progress.

Justin Raimondo I see little chance of a Left-Right alliance against anything at the moment, much less against our foreign policy of global intervention.

The presidency of Barack Obama has polarized the country to a degree we haven't seen since the Sixties. In the age of empire, the presidential persona so defines our politics that it overwhelms virtually all other factors. With the electorate and the elites divided between pro-Obama and anti-Obama camps, the issue of war and peace is viewed through a distorting prism, one that tends to fracture any Left-Right unity.

The Left is devoted to Obama for all sorts of political and cultural reasons and refuses to confront his administration on its conduct of foreign affairs. Never mind that their hero has out-Bushed Bush, escalating the war on terror and fol-

lowing through on Obama's campaign pledge to invade Pakistan. We hear not a whisper of protest from the formerly "antiwar" Democrats in Congress nor from the official peace movement of former Stalinists and wild-eyed Trotskyites. Indeed, United for Peace and Justice, the major lefty "united front against war," hailed Obama's election and since then seems to have dropped the "peace" aspect of its activities altogether.

On the Right, the neocons are still doing a bang-up business at the same old stand, unhurt by having been totally discredited by the Iraq War. Although facing an insurgency by Ron Paul's legions, the neocons are far from being finished as a political force. While gains have been made by anti-interventionist conservatives who can play the Obama card—I often call the current phase of our eternal war on terror "Obama's war" to prod right-wingers in an anti-interventionist direction—there is still much work to be done.

So what we have is the complete absence of a real leftist movement in this country, in the sense of the old-line hard-Left anti-imperialism that animated the antiwar movement of the 1960s, and a neocon-dominated Right that is fanatically devoted to militarism as a matter of high principle. This leaves us with a void in terms of political leadership.

But while the subjective conditions for a mass Left-Right movement against our crazed foreign policy are not good, the objective conditions—popular disgust with and rising opposition to endless wars—have never been better. A recent Pew poll showed that Americans would prefer a foreign policy described as "minding our own business." The same poll shows our elites have quite the opposite opinion. This divergence is the linchpin of any movement against interventionism: the brewing populist revolt against our corrupt, hapless elites can be turned against the War Party quite easily. Once we get political leaders on both sides of the spectrum who see this as an opportunity and move to take advantage of it, a Left-Right alliance against the empire will develop naturally.

JUSTIN RAIMONDO *is editorial director of Antiwar.com.*

Robert Dreyfuss Except in the unlikely event that things in Afghanistan go horribly awry—for instance, were the Taliban to launch a Tet-style countrywide assault that threatens to seize Kabul—it's almost impossible to imagine a significant antiwar movement emerging in the United States. Neither the mainstream media nor the political elite have challenged the dominant narrative that the war is a defensive crusade against the people behind 9/11. U.S. casualties have been confined to a tolerable level for the body politic. And so far, at least, the public seems to believe that the Obama administration can succeed.

Despite all that, a significant percentage of Americans, the polls tell us, no longer supports the war in Afghanistan. Yet incipient opposition to the war has not produced a vibrant antiwar movement.

In fact, opposition to the war in Afghanistan has been confined to a boisterous, usual-suspects coalition of activists, including such organizations as Code Pink that have little resonance with a broader constituency. That's unlikely to change, as long as the public at large—along with many progressive and left-leaning activists—believes that Obama can deliver the goods in areas such as job creation, financial regulation, and healthcare reform. Even during the Bush administration, when anti-Cheney, anti-neoconservative animus spurred leftist opposition to the war in Iraq, the antiwar movement was relatively small and ineffective.

Recently, some activists have tried to broaden the idea of an antiwar movement by imagining a Left-Right coalition, bringing together progressives, anti-military activists, and the peace movement on the Left with realist-minded, traditional conservatives and libertarians who oppose U.S. interventionism on the Right. Unfortunately, such a two-winged bird is unlikely to take flight, if for no other reason than the fact that its left wing is many times heavier than its right wing.

On the Right, few organized Republicans and libertarians will risk being exiled by challenging the party's lockstep embrace of the military and its counterinsurgency cult. With the exception of outliers such as Rep. Walter Jones—and, of course, the quixotic and weirdly off-kilter Ron Paul—there is no measurable opposition to the war among Republicans. Indeed, when Obama launched his escalation of the Afghan war last fall, the hyperpartisan Republicans abandoned partisanship and gleefully supported it. In that atmosphere, it's hard to imagine that antiwar sentiment can gain traction among the Republican base. Even the raucous, irrepressible Tea Party movement backs the war vociferously, if not intelligently.

On the Left, a band of progressive members of Congress—led by Reps. Dennis Kucinich and Jim McGovern and Sen. Russ Feingold—has pressed the Obama administration for an exit strategy. The antiwar caucus draws support from and energizes the antiwar movement, such as it is, including peace groups, church-based antiwar groups, and the organized Left. In contrast to the mindlessly pro-war GOP, there are scores of members of Congress who support their efforts, but just as their inability to block Bush's war efforts faltered, they've been undermined by the Democratic caucus's unwillingness to challenge Obama.

So what's the answer? Obama has declared that U.S. troops will begin leaving Afghanistan in July 2011. Between now and then, it's possible to imagine the small antiwar movement joining forces with liberal and centrist Democrats to press Obama

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to explain exactly what steps he plans to take to ensure that the deadline is a real one. Will the Afghan National Army be ready? Does the U.S. have a strategy to engage the Taliban and its allies in credible talks? Is Obama launching a diplomatic surge among interested countries, including Afghanistan's neighbors, to underwrite a new coalition government? That's a strategy that could energize the peace movement, motivate the Democratic leadership in Congress and, perhaps, dovetail with what the administration may be thinking anyway.

ROBERT DREYFUSS is an investigative journalist whose work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*, and *The American Prospect*.

Markos Moulitsas On war and civil-liberty issues, the problem is simple: Republicans are too eager to demagogue and Democrats are too quick to cave. Fear pervades both parties—the former is afraid of scary brown people, the latter afraid of electoral losses.

If Republicans quit trying to score political points by accusing Democrats of being weak on national security, then Democrats could quit being cowards. But of course, that will never happen. The modern GOP is built on a solid neocon foundation, and its war on terror rhetoric gave it control of the Senate in the '00s (counting among Democrats' casualties Sen. Max Cleland, a triple amputee Vietnam War hero) and saved George W. Bush's hide in 2004.

The public may have since soured on the neocons, but subsequent electoral defeats have only radicalized Republicans. Indeed, neocons like Daniel Pipes have doubled down on the strategy, even demanding that President Obama attack Iran as a way to "salvage his tottering administration." While Sarah Palin quickly endorsed the idea, Obama didn't seem eager to use our troops as political pawns. Thankfully.

Yet Obama is often politically isolated when he tries to do the right thing, such as closing Guantanamo and trying terrorist suspects in civilian courts. Republicans, with little else in their electoral arsenal, have desperately tried to whip the public into a frenzy of fear. The Christmas Crotch Bomber failed spectacularly in his amateurish attempt to bring down an airliner, yet that didn't stop Bill Kristol from saying on "Fox News Sunday," "This last week has been a victory for al-Qaeda." Fox anchor Brit Hume agreed, "If I were the al-Qaeda people, I think Bill's right. They could look at this as a success. This was an attack that didn't succeed on the scale it was expected to, but did succeed." Lurita Doan, a Bush administration bureaucrat, wrote at the conservative Big Government site, "Everyone keeps saying how lucky we are that the 'crotch' bomber on Flight 253 was unable to ignite the explosives hidden in his underwear, but I am sorry

to report that the attack was actually a huge success." Conservatives need a strong al-Qaeda to scare the American people, so they've become al-Qaeda's biggest cheerleaders.

So where exactly are these anti-interventionist conservatives, willing to partner with progressives on rolling back the most ridiculous tenets of the absurd war on terror? Unfortunately, they don't exist in any appreciable numbers.

MARKOS MOULITSAS is the founder of *Daily Kos*. His third book, *American Taliban: How Sex, Sin, and Power Bind Jihadists With the Radical Right*, will be out in September.

Donald Devine Peace movements generally do not work in the U.S. because it is so easy to characterize them as unpatriotic. Only two have been successful for a prolonged period and only one, America First before World War II, was a true coalition between Left and Right. The other, against the war in Vietnam, could not solve the problem that the Left was opposed ideologically to war itself (or to this one because the enemy was leftist), and the Right was only opposed pragmatically, especially regarding the means that should be utilized.

The same is pretty much true today. The ideological divide is immense. Could the Left and Right agree that Ronald Reagan committed fewer U.S. forces to foreign military engagements than any post-World War II president other than Jimmy Carter? Could they agree that was an antiwar policy?

Was President Reagan's statement of policy in his first Inaugural Address sufficiently noninterventionist? "As for the enemies of freedom, those who are potential adversaries, they will be reminded that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it; we will not surrender for it, now or ever. Our forbearance should never be misunderstood. Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do so we have the best chance of never having to use that strength."

Could Left and Right agree that his policy, culminating in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987, produced the most significant movement toward peace in modern times? By the treaty's deadline of June 1, 1991, a total of 2,692 nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with intermediate ranges had been destroyed.

If something so simple cannot be agreed upon, there are great obstacles to overcome before any Left-Right discussion could be fruitful.

DONALD DEVINE is editor of the *American Conservative Union Foundation's Conservative Battleline On Line*.

David Rieff I see no reason conservatives and progressives can't join forces in opposing the war on terror. If they want to stand a chance of reining it in, they'd better. (I'm extremely pessimistic about the chances of stopping it entirely.) Like William Pfaff, who I don't think could comfortably be pigeon-holed as being Left or Right, I have a terrible fear that only a disaster will make a substantial number of Americans think differently about our descent into militarism since at least the end of World War II.

For now, the hold of the National Security State seems as impregnable as our two-party system. We may grumble about both from time to time, and look hopefully toward third-party candidacies, but from William Jennings Bryan and Eugene Debs to Ross Perot and Ralph Nader, they have never managed to realize their supporters' hopes. I see no unsentimental reason why a Ron Paul candidacy will do any better.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the two-party duopoly that rules this country through the self-reinforcing mechanisms of money, gerrymandering, and incumbency has been to convince the public that this rigged game is in its own interest. Similarly, 50 years of propaganda—from liberals as much if not more than from conservatives—has persuaded the American public that the U.S. having roughly 1,000 foreign military bases is something we dare not change for the good of the world as much as for our own national interests.

This is not patriotism but narcissism. But try telling that to the propagandists at the liberal foreign-policy blog "Democracy Arsenal"—the name tells you everything you need to know—or the conservative ones at *National Review's* "The Corner." Castro once infamously said, "Inside the Revolution anything, outside it nothing." Replace revolution with Pax Americana or, if you prefer the soft-power liberal variant, American leadership and "moral authority," and the imperial consensus in contemporary Washington takes pretty much the same line.

Breaking this consensus is the great task of anyone who believes the continuation of the American empire will lead to disaster. For the antiwar Left and Right to come together to do so seems like common sense. Having said that, as readers of *The American Conservative* know far better than I, the vast majority of the American Right is still firmly committed to the Republican Party, and the Republican Party—as speeches of all the major contenders for the Republican nomination in 2012 make depressingly clear—is unbending in its support of the National Security State.

The Left of the Democratic Party isn't anti-imperialist enough for me, but it is anti-imperialist by tradition and inclination. Still, I have a difficult time seeing leftists within the party turning on President Obama. What they find intolerable is less that he is behaving like Bush 2.0 in Afghanistan than that this hawkish foreign policy has not been accompanied

by a strong push for the social-democratic domestic-policy agenda candidate Obama promised. Much like the attitude of the Bush administration to social conservatives, the Obama administration counts on the fact that the Left feels it has nowhere else to go.

Changing those two dynamics is the work of a generation, if it is even possible at all. But if we, on the anti-imperial Right and the anti-imperial Left, believe what we say, we had damned well better try.

DAVID RIEFF is a contributing writer to the *New York Times Magazine* and the author of eight books.

Thomas E. Woods Jr. I am skeptical about the prospects for a Left-Right alliance against war even though I would very much like to see one. My skepticism derives from personal experience: important progressive websites, seeking to damage my good name, have supported their case against me by pointing to Max Boot's criticism of my work. One of the world's shortest books might discuss the U.S. military interventions that Boot has not supported with macabre gusto. His impatience with me is due in part to my strong disapproval of Woodrow Wilson's decision to intervene in World War I.

If progressives prefer Max Boot to an antiwar libertarian like me, and in fact have a soft spot for the unspeakable Wilson, I am unable to see how a proposed alliance is going to work.

Yet there's no reason in theory that it can't, and in practice we do have a helpful model: the Anti-Imperialist League, established in the waning years of the 19th century. There Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, William James, Edward Atkinson, and a wide variety of other figures of Left and Right worked in happy concord against the War Party of their day.

One potential difficulty, some have suggested, is that such a coalition would lack a positive program, united only in its opposition to war. I disagree. Peace more than suffices as a positive program. War, after all, has managed to hold together the Lieberman/Limbaugh alliance pretty well.

I suspect Right and Left have much to learn from each other. Several years ago, I wrote a lengthy paper on the work of Seymour Melman, a leftist whose analysis of the military state struck me as valuable and original. I wrote the paper in order to alert libertarians to his important work, which I suspect had been neglected either because of Melman's (largely irrelevant) ideological commitments or simply because our side had never come across it before.

The most dangerous extremists in our society are to be found in that continuum from Mitt Romney to Hillary Clinton

Symposium

that we grotesquely describe as the “mainstream.” It thinks nothing of lying to the American public in the service of its foreign ambitions. (These are mere “mistakes” to be mildly regretted after the fact.) It cheers military campaigns that create widows and orphans in unimaginable numbers, all dissenters from this policy being, of course, America haters. Do I want to see an alliance against this horror show? More than anything in the world.

THOMAS E. WOODS JR. *is the author of nine books and co-editor of We Who Dared to Say No to War: American Antiwar Writing from 1812 to Now.*

John V. Walsh For too long we have all been Sunni and Shia. We in opposition to war and empire have been defeated because we have been divided. The deepest fissure is loyalty to the political parties of empire, Democrat or Republican, in place of a unifying commitment to the principle of nonintervention. As long as this crippling rupture persists, we shall have empire and its necessary acolyte, war, with all the death and destruction the latter entails.

When Bush II was in charge, the progressive wing of the Democrat Party properly railed against him for his war on Iraq. But with the Obama regime, these same critics have fallen silent or have muffled their criticism, turning it into an impotent, reverential plea to do the right thing.

There is an urgency to forge a unified antiwar program for at least two reasons. First, the march of technology is such that war in the future may well threaten the human species and perhaps all of life, a truth to which Einstein long ago called our attention. Certainly it can bring suffering of untold magnitude, greater by far than that of World War II. Second, the main target of the empire’s activities now and a large part of the rationale for its depredations in Central Asia is China. America’s policy is to allow no other country to approach it as the world’s number one economic and military power. But if China is to emerge from poverty, given its huge population, it will necessarily stand on an equal footing with the U.S. or even eclipse it in output and wealth. Conflict with China, especially using India as a U.S. proxy, would mean untold death and destruction, and no one knows where such a conflict would lead. It must not happen.

What then does it take to bring Left and Right together? First, a maturity that allows one to form alliances based on certain goals without regard to others. This is, after all, politics not theology. Second, confidence. If one feels that one’s views will not stand up to contact with those of differing philosophies, then nothing is possible. The third requirement is mutual respect

instead of stereotypes. If these can be achieved, there is no reason for failure.

JOHN V. WALSH *writes for CounterPunch.com and Antiwar.com.*

John Lukacs When the Soviet empire collapsed in 1989, the reactions of most Americans were commendable. They did not gloat over the troubles of their adversary. The few exceptions to this overall benevolence were the nationalist “conservatives” and so-called neoconservatives. The former kept shouting, “We won!”—meaning, of course, the Republican Party. The latter, on the ascendant, declared that the time had come for many things, including the rubbing of Russia’s nose in the dust. Yet the great majority of the American people were indifferent to those sentiments. Even the first Bush’s victory in the Gulf War left them largely unmoved. So in 1992, most voted for a Democrat to become their president.

Throughout the 40 or more years of the Cold War, the Democrats had seldom, or perhaps never, proposed a foreign policy markedly different from the Republicans. The main reason was their fear of not seeming nationalist enough. Meanwhile, the Republicans completed their transformation into a nationalist and populist party. As early as 1956, their platform called for “the establishment of American air and naval bases all around the Soviet Union.” (This was the party that liberals still called “isolationist.”)

Then in 1992, this country acquired a president who was almost entirely uninterested in foreign affairs. He appointed Madeleine Albright as secretary of state, and she committed what was probably the gravest mistake in the foreign policy of the Republic in more than 200 years—the extension of the American military alliance system after 1997 to a dozen countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Lithuania, many of them abutting the very frontiers of Russia.

This was part of a foreign policy that has by now established more than 700 bases across the globe and that an entire American generation—liberals and conservatives alike—has come to take for granted. This mental condition constrains even the current president.

So my melancholy answer to the question of whether Left and Right together can change our foreign policy is no. But I conclude with one of Rochefoucauld’s great maxims—things are never quite as bad, or as good, as they seem. In other words, history remains unpredictable. Not much comfort that, but there it is.

JOHN LUKACS *is the author of 30 books, including the recent Legacy of the Second World War.*

America First

By Louis Auchincloss

Louis Auchincloss died on Jan. 26 at age 92, having long outlived the world he chronicled. "The tragedy of American civilization is that it has swept away WASP morality and put nothing in its place," he wrote.

A Wall Street lawyer until 1987, Auchincloss produced 30 novels and 17 volumes of short stories. Scrawled in longhand from his Park Avenue apartment, they took place in what he called the "comfortable" world—not obscenely rich but able to send a son to Groton and Yale, to spend summers on Long Island and holidays abroad.

If Auchincloss's prose seemed upright, so were his subjects. The usual American hero is singular: a gunslinger, a gambler, a maverick making good against long odds. But Auchincloss's focus was on a whole class already arrived, and his approach wasn't mythic so much as anthropological.

"It is thought to be irrelevant, a faded and fading genteel-Gentile enclave," his cousin and legal client Gore Vidal wrote, "when, in actual fact, this little world comprises the altogether too-vigorous and self-renewing ruling class of the United States."

Since then, whether by shame over its privilege or desire to enjoy the good life, Auchincloss's establishment has surrendered the heights. Prominent names and private clubs remain, but the sense of social responsibility that once accompanied elite status has quietly gone out. The title of Auchincloss's final book—Last of the Old Guard—well described the author himself.

In his memory, we present this short story taken from the collection Skinny Island: More Tales From Manhattan.

TIME HAD BEEN HEAVY on the hands of Elaine Wagstaff ever since she had abandoned her lovely pink house on the Avenue Foch and scuttled back to New York before the Nazi hordes. She used the word "scuttle" only to herself, for only to herself was she obliged to admit its appropriateness. She could never quite overcome the feeling that she should have stayed on and joined the resistance, though the resistance of a septuagenarian American widow would hardly have saved her beloved France. But wasn't there always an element of scuttling in any self-removal in the face of danger, particularly when so many brave friends were left behind? Elaine had hardly relished seeing the Rolls-Royce of the Windsors on the road before her; it was hateful to be identified with the international trash rushing to safer harbors to pursue their *dolce far niente*. Privilege in defeat makes for unlovable bedfellows.

This sense of unjust exemption from peril and hardship continued even more intensely after she was settled in the comfortable third-floor bedroom of her daughter Suzannah's brownstone of East Seventy-third Street, from the bay window of which she could gaze west to Central Park as she sipped her coffee on chilly fall mornings in 1940. Certainly she had to concede that Suzannah was doing her best to take the blame for that exemption upon her own square shoulders. Never in a long lifetime of being

spoiled had Elaine felt quite so "nannied" as she did under her daughter's unceasing ministrations.

"But, Mother darling, no matter what you say, you've been under far greater strain than you can possibly realize. Oh, I've talked it over with Doctor Jennison! He quite agrees, and he has many refugees among his patients."

"I am not exactly a refugee, Suzie. I am still, after all, an American citizen, and not a poor one, either. It isn't as if I were costing anyone anything, and generous as you and Peyton have been—oh, generous to a fault!—I count on making it up to you."

"Oh, Mother! You know we'd never take a penny. Peyton would be mortally insulted."

"Well, we needn't dwell on it. After all, everything I have will soon enough be yours. It would be robbing Peter to pay Paul."

"Mother, don't talk that way! You're going to live to be a hundred. Anyway, you've got to take it easy until you have your strength back. Crossing the Atlantic through submarine packs has to take a toll on the nerves."

Suzannah looked as if it would not have taken much toll on her nerves. She was all Wagstaff, all her father's child, with a round flat face, a tiny mouth and owl eyes under thick black brows. Elaine never ceased to wonder that her own family, which produced so many long-necked, slender beauties, so many "Boldinis," as the saying used to be, should have ended with Suzannah. But Suzannah, after all, was 50; she did not need allure. Would allure have even suited the wife of a lawyer as important

and unattractive as Peyton Priest? Elaine always thought of him as grinning and bony, with thumbs under his lapels, a Daumier caricature.

"You forget I came on an Argentine ship, darling. They don't sink neutrals."

"Oh, don't they! Half the time they don't even know what they're shooting. Peyton gets it all from his friends in the State Department. And aren't I the lucky one to have had all those wonderful trips abroad when I did! Do you know I totaled up from my diary the number of times I crossed the Atlantic with you? Thirty-two! Do you remember how you used to come to my cabin and wake me up before dawn so we could be up on the bridge with the captain and catch the first sight of land? No matter how late you'd been up playing bridge or dancing, you'd always be ready to stand with little Suzie straining for the first glimpse of Europe!"

But no. Elaine readjusted the shawl on her shoulders as if to shake off the cocoon in which Suzannah was trying to envelop her. No, no, no. It hadn't been that way at all on those voyages across the wintry Atlantic on the *Berengaria*, the *Olympic*, the *Majestic*. She had taken the little girl out of school against everyone's wishes ("But, Miss Chapin, you know she'll learn more French in Paris") and left a hurt David to the obsessive pursuit of his decaying business ("Darling, if you're too proud to live on my money—our money, as I've always regarded it—if you insist on wasting your life in a family business that hardly pays the cook, then that must be your problem. I'm going to Paris"). She had gone abroad year after year and had finally bought the house on the Avenue Foch, which, after David's death, had become her principal residence. She had been selfish, but at least she had lived, as the Wagstaffs would never have allowed her to had she knuckled under to them and stayed home. And

she had preserved her marriage, too, such as it was; she had successfully reared her only child, such as she was. But she wasn't at 75 going to kid herself that it had all been a howling success.

Yet that was precisely what Suzannah seemed determined to make it, and, in her own way, always had. From her earliest years she had constituted herself as a kind of protector of both her parents. Daddy had always to be made to feel the successful businessman that he only too obviously wasn't, and Mummy, despite her globe-trotting, her frenetic social life, her passion for cards, her fear of boredom, had to be represented to the world as an almost compulsively loving parent who would give up the greatest party of the year to sit at the bedside of an even mildly ailing daughter. And when Suzannah screamed and threw tantrums about being left behind when Mummy went to Europe, wasn't it because of her child's insight that Mummy needed a chaperone?

And hadn't she? Hadn't little Suzie proved an effective one? Would Elaine have gone further with Rex Anders, or even with Guy de Vierzon, had Suzannah and Suzannah's governess (who could forget Miss Prunty?) not been in Paris? Perhaps, though she had been inclined to believe that it was more the warning example of her cousin Theodora, of just her age and looks and means, but who always went too far, much too far—she would read aloud to Elaine, with that piercing laugh, the worst tabloid extravagances about herself—that kept her in line. Much as she loved and admired and envied Theodora, who had sometimes traveled with her to Italy and Morocco, she could still see that a part of her value to her wayward cousin had lain in her own unquestioned respectability. The respectability of which little Suzie had certainly been a symbol.

Ah, what would Theodora, long dead now of a liver ailment, have thought of

the war? What could she have thought of it but that it had made final ashes of the charred world that had been left of their youthful one after the ravages of its predecessor? Elaine shivered. Was Suzannah still talking?

She was.

"Oh course, I don't expect you, darling, to spend all your time cooped up in the house. Fleming can drive you around the park this afternoon and maybe over to Riverside Drive. And in another week or so we'll plan some little parties of your friends."

"Suzannah, I don't think, after what I've seen in France, I'm going to be in much of a mood for parties."

"Oh, I don't really mean parties. Just a few old pals in for supper. But perhaps you're right. Perhaps we should find something for you to do more in keeping with the times. You might be interested in helping with some of my work."

"What sort of work is that?"

"I'm in an organization called America First. We're trying to rally antiwar opinion against Roosevelt's underhand efforts to get us involved in Europe."

"You mean you're against Lend Lease?"

"Well, not if it's really confined to that. We don't object to giving some help to England. We're not for the Nazis—far from it. But what we don't see is why American boys should be sent abroad to pull England's chestnuts out of a fire lit by her own imperialism and stupidity!"

Elaine had often wondered what sort of a cause Suzannah would ultimately embrace, for she had always seemed made for one. But through the matrimonial years this large, somehow steaming girl had seemed oddly dominated by her sarcastic, grinning husband. Elaine disliked the very thought of Peyton Priest.

"I suppose a Nazi victory would be a very nasty thing," she ventured.

"But that won't happen. England can always negotiate some kind of stale-

mate. The point is that it's a European mess and should be solved by Europeans. England and France got us in once before, and what good did it do us? Or them, for that matter?"

"My poor France," Elaine murmured sadly. "If she has made mistakes, she is paying sadly for them."

"Mother, darling, I'm afraid you've always had a blind spot on the subject of the French. Yet deep down, I suspect you know how rotten their whole society is. New York is full of your titled friends who've fled the country they've betrayed and are now using the dollars of their American wives and mothers to buy the blood of our boys for their lost cause!"

Elaine blinked. Certainly Suzannah had a cause now! "Well, I must admit, my French friends did make rather a shamble of things. But I can only think of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem about the lovely light shed by the candle that burned at both ends. Oh, I suppose you're right, my dear. Why should boys who've never known the beauties of France die for her? Did I?"

"Exactly! You wouldn't want to send Bert to fight overseas, would you?"

"Dear Bert. When will he come home to greet his loving grandmamma?"

"Soon, I hope. I don't want him to cut any classes at Stanford. The draft only defers him while he's in school, and his marks have not been all they should be."

"The draft! Horrors. How close it all makes you seem to the war. But, of course, you're right. Bert mustn't fight for an old, decayed civilization. He's so American, Bert." Elaine wondered what her only grandchild looked like now. She had not seen him in three years. He had been a nice enough boy, but short and stout and, she was afraid, dull. "Yes," she mused, "what has Bert to do with all that? His life is here. His future is here." The memory of the Windsors' fleeing Rolls jarred suddenly upon her

mental vision. What an idle life she had led! What a waste. What trivial occupations. And poor, awkward, unlovely Bert should die for all that? "Do you know, Suzannah, I think I'll look into this thing of yours. What do you call it? America First?"

"Oh, Mother, that would be so wonderful!"

Elaine did not find her tasks, when she took up the isolationist cause the following week, very demanding. She went to the large office leased by Suzannah's organization from a bank on Madison Avenue and helped to draft responses to letters inquiring about its goals. She was given a good deal to read, mostly in the form of newspaper and magazine articles. Elaine had never taken much interest in public affairs, but she had tended to take for granted, like most of her fellow expatriates, that America should oppose the Axis powers, even at the risk of war. Now, however, reading this new material with what she hoped was more an open than an empty mind, she found some of it rather persuasive. Mightn't it be better to let Germany win a round once in a while rather than having to send troops to Europe every 25 years?

But the real issue for her was Suzie. Here at last was something she could do for Suzie to make up for having been an indifferent parent. For the whole painful business of her repatriation had taught her to face up to her own deficiencies, at least in the maternal department. And poor Suzie had always been such an angel to her! Never once complaining about being made to feel a dowdy and unwanted child. She would come now into her mother's tiny office two or three times in a morning. (Elaine worked only in the mornings) to ask what she was reading and then hug her and cry: "Oh, Mummy, it's such fun our being together in all this!"

Suzie's intense preoccupation with her immediate family, Elaine decided, had to explain her attitude towards the war. For if Suzie adored her mother, she adored her son Bert even more. Bert must be kept alive, no matter what happened to the boundaries of Europe. And wasn't it possible, Elaine wondered, that Bert might have been as cool a son as his granddame has been a mother? Why had he gone so far away to collage if not to escape the tightness of Suzie's embraces? Suzie had always been determined to have a loving family around her, even if she had to create it out of the fevered workings of her own imagination. Had her father come back to earth, he would no doubt have been smothered with kisses and put to work in America First.

As Elaine's social life since her return to New York had been largely circumscribed by her daughter's, she had had little occasion to encounter the opposition in what was left of the old world of her friends and cousins to the cause she was now promoting. But one day, when she decided for a change to lunch at the Colony Club, and was walking to a quiet corner of the members' dining room, she happened to pass a table at which some of her old acquaintances were seated, one of whom she instantly recognized as the recently arrived Marquise de Monrives, born Adelaide Stutz of Pittsburgh. Elaine particularly disliked Adelaide because of her appropriation, many years before, of Rex Anders, whom Adelaide had been willing to treat with far greater warmth, and she was disgusted to see her rival now, bloated, huge, with a choker of rubies and hideous purple eyebrows, laughing her high, shrieking abominable laugh, culminating in a screamed "Oh! Oh! Oh!" and apparently taking over Elaine's old New York circle. She quickened her step, only to be stopped by the marquise's direct address.

"Isn't that Elaine Wagstaff? Of course it is! Elaine, darling, don't run away. We were just speaking of you. Tell us the truth. Tell us that you've been libeled."

Elaine paused, smiling briefly at the others, considering, with perfectly justified smugness, that she was better preserved than any of them. "How have I been libeled, Adelaide? I must warn you, it may be perfectly true."

The table exploded in remonstrance, as if she had not been in jest.

"Oh, it can't be!"

"We won't believe it."

"Never. You, almost a Française!"

"What is it, girls?" Elaine demanded, surprised.

"They say," Adelaide murmured throatily, "they say, my dear, that you're ... America First."

Elaine stared coolly at each of the five in turn. She finished with the Marquise de Monrives.

"And what are you, Adelaide? America Last?"

And she reveled in the quick stride of her own immediate departure.

She told Suzannah about the incident with pride; the latter was vociferous in her enthusiasm.

"Oh, Mummy, you and I are really together at last! I'm so happy. You're free of those horrible harpies."

But Elaine did not like this classification of her friends. "Adelaide I give up to you freely, my dear, but the others? I don't think you can call Florence King a harpy. Or Melanie Codman."

"Oh, maybe not exactly harpies. I guess I went too far there. But they belong to that international set that feels so much closer to London and Paris than they do to Chicago or Des Moines. And they wouldn't hesitate to shed American blood to save Eton or Oxford or the Comedie Française or the Grand Prix. They're not real Americans, Mummy. And now that I've got you away from them, after all these years, I'm

damned if I'm going to let them snatch you back!"

Elaine was struck by the sudden idea that Suzie might be identifying all the things that her mother had preferred to herself in the past—parties in Paris, racing, gambling, beautiful people—with the Allied cause in Europe. It was as if Hitler were fighting high society and gaining an odd respectability for doing so!

"I think you'll find many of the husbands of my friends have honorable war records."

"But don't you see, Mummy, back then it was the same thing! They were fighting Anglo-French imperialism!"

Elaine was still too much alone in her new life to dispense with Suzie's support, but she began now to wonder how long she would need quite so many bristling turrets and machicolated battlements. Her daughter and son-in-law appeared to bring to the task of keeping America out of the war an animus against their opponents far bitterer than seemed required. Peyton Priest, like his wife, had little use for the survival of the kind of world that Elaine still wistfully missed and had perhaps too willfully loved. Indeed, he went further than she did.

"Suzie tells me you're really one of us now," Peyton told her than night before dinner, patting the hand into which he then placed one of his sugary rum cocktails. He looked at her with that guarded twinkle, that suspended husk of a smile that was supposed to conceal, or at least cover, his distrust of all nonlegal minds and of female minds in particular. "I am very happy about that. You can now be our Trojan horse in the Colony Club."

"Don't you and Suzie go a little bit far there? Some of my fellow members are very intelligent women."

"Intelligent, my dear Elaine, of course! Have I ever denied it? My only point is that there are certain vital fac-

tors in modern life of which they are simply unaware. Because they exclude Jews from their society, they are ignorant of the force and organization of Jewish opinion. They are unaware, therefore, of the extent to which they are being manipulated."

"You think Jews are sinister?"

"I think that Jews, understandably, are more interested in destroying Hitler than we need be. It's a question, again, of what is and is not in our best national interest. I do not happen to believe that Jews put America first. Perhaps I should not myself, were I a Jew. But I'm not a Jew."

And glad of it, Elaine reflected, taking in that somber grin. She had been too inured to anti-Semitism in her long life to be shocked by it. She even tended to regard it, in some types of American professional men, as something naturally associated with their heaviness and seriousness. But in her international circles any form of ethnic prejudice had been considered "hick"; one could not be bigoted and "top drawer." Of course, in France she had met anti-Semites, but she was well aware that her son-in-law would have made little distinction between a Jew and a Frenchman. It was all rather confusing.

Peyton, at any rate, was only a source of mild amusement, or at worst of mild irritation. What really changed the quiet tenor of Elaine's existence and brought her up before the shooting pains of choice was a conversation that she had at the Colony Club with Erica Breeze.

Mrs. Alonzo Breeze, at least in Elaine's eyes, was the greatest social figure in Manhattan. Only ten years younger than Elaine, she was still the thinnest, daintiest, most elegant creature imaginable, and she wasn't afraid to wear large jewels or to tell you what she had paid for them. She had convinced herself that she was tired of the social whirl and sought only the divine

peace of quiet talk with a real friend—like whichever one she happened to be speaking to at the moment—and, what was more, she had the charm to convince that person it was true. She and Elaine were second cousins, but they had not met since Elaine's return to New York. Erica Breeze had the kind of visual intellect that can focus only on a person who is present. As with Louis XIV, out of sight was totally out of mind.

"Elaine, darling, I never see you! Are you often at the club? No, I get in here very little. My life has not been much among women." Here she emitted a surprisingly hearty laugh. Erica was very successful with hearty laughs. "But what's all this I hear about your being an isolationist? Are you really America First, Elaine?"

"Are you—?"

"America last? I know you said that to Adelaide. And of course she is, was, and always has been. But you, my dear! You who have always so beautifully reminded us of our debt to France! How can you tie yourself up to such a bunch of dowdies?"

"Well, I can't help wondering why our young men should die to pull England's—"

"Chestnuts out of the fire? Because they'll die in even greater numbers if they don't. And to think of you, Elaine, one of the loveliest, most glamorous things we've got, rescued from all the horrors of war, only to be taken over by those frumps! Why should they fear the Nazis? They're as ugly as Huns." Again that laugh! "Paris is what they're afraid of, not Berlin—anything that will show them up for what they are. No, no, don't even talk to me about it—I've neglected you horribly—imagine letting you fall into such claws. I'm going to remedy things immediately. Come to dinner. Tonight! I've got the most marvelous Free French general and a secretary

from the British Embassy. And all sorts of old pals of yours keep asking, 'What on earth has happened to Elaine Wagstaff?' Don't worry, we won't quiz you about your horrible new friends. We won't let you say a word. Just listen!"

Elaine went that night to Erica's and had a glorious time. She had almost forgotten what it was like to be among people who cared so intensely for appearances, for things. Dining at Erica's apartment, a veritable museum of impressionist painting, with her easily talking, easily laughing friends, was like

ERICA WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL WITH HEARTY LAUGHS. **"BUT WHAT'S ALL THIS I HEAR ABOUT YOUR BEING AN ISOLATIONIST? ARE YOU REALLY AMERICA FIRST, ELAINE?"**

swimming in a translucent Caribbean cove amid brilliantly colored fish over a sand as smooth as a rich carpet. It made Suzannah's world seem like the hustle and bustle of a Coney Island beach covered with bulbous women and white-limbed men in lumpy black bathing suits.

The talk turned to the war and England's ordeal. Nobody made so much as a glancing reference to Elaine's supposed convictions, and she listened at first gratefully, and at last avidly to all they had to say. By the end of the evening she was thoroughly ashamed of her work on Suzannah's committee.

She slept little that night, bracing herself for the disagreeable talk that she was bound to have with her daughter. It turned out even worse than she had anticipated. No sooner had she mentioned the fact, when Suzie came in to bid her good morning with her breakfast tray, that she had enjoyed herself at Mrs. Breeze's, than her daughter burst out: "I suppose there was a lot of talk about

how soon they could get our boys over there!"

"There was some talk of greater aid to England, yes."

"Like an immediate declaration of war?"

"No, Suzie, not that. I found Erica and her guests considerably more moderate than I find your friends."

"And so they won you over? In just one evening? Just like that! Oh, Mummy!"

"No, dear, it was not just like that. I simply thought that they put the case against a Nazi victory very cogently."

"I knew it! I should not have let you go! I should have locked the front door and held you here by force." Suzie stamped her foot now in an alarming show of temper. "You're like a drug addict. All Mrs. Breeze has to do is give you a whiff of that old atmosphere, and there you are, back in the same old crowd, caught by the same old clichés, ready like Saint Peter to deny me, not three times, but thirty times three, three hundred times three!"

"Suzie! Must I remind you that you're speaking to your mother?"

"As if I could forget it! What have I tried to do all my life but have a mother? And, of course, you've always cared more for that crowd and all their drinking and gambling and love-making, than you've ever cared for poor dull little me! Oh, I know it, I've always known it, but I still had to try to save you from yourself and bring you back to decency and honor and patriotism. Well, I guess I must face the fact that it's a hopeless task!"

"If it's a hopeless task," Elaine said with dignity, "I think you had much better give it up."

"Oh, Mummy, no!" Suzie clasped her hands beseechingly. "Don't listen to me. I'll still help you. Please! Give me one more chance."

But Elaine, contemplating the fat flushed cheeks, the wild eyes and the messy hair of her only offspring, felt nothing now but distaste. She had tried, God knows, and nothing worked. And what did it matter, really, if it did or didn't? Churchill and Erica were preferable to Hitler and Suzie. For once in life, anyway, good taste and morals could go hand in hand."

"I think under the circumstances, Suzannah," she replied in a tone of lofty sadness, "that it might be best if I moved to the St. Regis. I've trespassed long enough on your hospitality."

Suzie burst into tears. "Go where you want! I'm not stopping you. I was an idiot to think I could ever weigh against any part of your old life. Your old life? Hell, your whole life."

Elaine was very comfortable at the St. Regis in the delicious little suite looking over and up Fifth Avenue, and it was indeed delightful to be taken up again by Erica Breeze. She knew that Erica's sudden spurts of perfectly genuine enthusiasm for old friends whom she had somehow lost sight of had to be taken advantage of in their brief heat. It was not that Erica would drop her when the spurt was over, but Elaine would then no longer be able to count on the daily invitations that poured forth while her stock was high. But by then, Elaine would have had her chance to sink her own roots in Erica's Eden. It was all the chance she needed.

Elaine featured at Erica's dinners as a martyr of the Nazi conquest, as one who had been flung, stripped and battle weary, on our shores and was now

ready and qualified to plead the cause of the threatened old world to the still immune new one. She rapidly put together every horror story that she had heard in Paris, embellishing them a bit—who, after all, could or would want to correct her?—and found that she could be quite effective on her feet, gazing wistfully over the heads of her audience as she told her brief tales. She had always had a hankering to act, and now she discovered that her low, grave, musical voice, with its slight tremulousness, could be used to good effect. She was able to convey the impression that she was imparting only a few drops of the sea of human misery in which she had come so near to drowning. And it was all in a good cause, was it not? Could one proselytize successfully without a bit of histrionics?

She had continued to see Suzannah for lunch once a week, and they had managed to keep the conversation on neutral topics. But after Elaine joined the membership drive for Intervention Now, the pro-war organization of which Erica was a co-chairman, Suzannah suggested dryly that it might be as well if they confined their communications to the telephone. And when Elaine started speaking in public, even those calls were discontinued.

On the Monday following the Sunday of Pearl Harbor the offices of Intervention Now throbbed with a muted elation. Elaine foregathered with a few of Erica's co-workers in her poster-filled office overlooking lower Fifth Avenue. After a secretary had closed the door, they sipped a toast to victory from a pint of warm champagne that Erica had brought in her handbag. It might have been indiscreet to be seen as overjoyed in the time of national sorrow.

"No matter what this dastardly attack may have cost us," Erica assured them

solemnly, "it will be seen one day as a blessing in disguise. Hirohito will have saved democracy despite his damned yellow soul!"

Elaine, on the way back to her desk, was informed she had a visitor waiting in the reception hall, and she found Suzannah staring sullenly at a poster of an anguished Polish peasant farmer holding up his murdered child. When she turned to her mother, Elaine was at once appalled by the flush on her cheeks and the hate in her eyes.

"Dear Suzie," she began falteringly, "we're all together now, aren't we?" And she held out doubtful arms as if to receive the prodigal.

The prodigal did not rush to them.

"I hope you're satisfied now!" Suzannah almost shouted. "Bert was on the *Arizona*."

"Bert? On the *Arizona*?" For a moment Elaine could not think who Bert was. "Oh, Bert!" she cried as it came to her. "But that can't be! Bert's at Stanford. Bert's not even in the service."

"He wasn't until three months ago. But then he quit college and enlisted. As seaman second class. And do you want to know why? Because of you! Because of you and your murderous committee!"

"You'd better come to my room," Elaine murmured, as the alarmed receptionist rose. "It's all right, Miss Pink. This is my daughter."

"I'm not going a step further into this snake pit," Suzannah ranted on. "You needn't worry, Miss Pink. I don't have a gun or a bomb. I'm going to say what I came to say. It won't take long." She turned back to Elaine. "My son read about you in the paper. He wrote me that if you could do what you were doing at your age, at least he could join up. And do you know what else he wrote me? That he was doing it to make up for what I was doing. That you and he had to wipe out my shame. My shame!"

"But, Suzannah, what have you heard about him? He's not hurt? He's not—"

"Dead? Very probably. We've haven't heard anything yet. How could we? But whatever it is, I hope you're satisfied."

"Oh, my poor child, how can you go on so? You're hysterical, of course. Let me take you home. Let me—"

"Keep your hands off me! This is what you've been after all my life, isn't it? To sacrifice everything, and everybody—Daddy, me, and now Bert—to your bloody France. You might as well have cut the poor boy's throat."

And she was gone. Elaine hurried to peer through the glass pane of the door into the corridor while Suzannah waited, interminably, ridiculously, for the elevator. At last the doors opened, and she almost jumped into the car.

Elaine went back into her little office and sat at her desk and tried to think and not to think. The boy might not be dead at all. Suzannah was half crazed. Then she shook her head, as if to clear her mind of something that might destroy her if she couldn't. For what sort of grotesque fate was it that made her so fatal to this wretched girl she had never loved? No, no, she wouldn't think of it! Even if Bert were dead, wouldn't many young men have to die? Why should Bert Priest be exempt?

She would go in to see Erica in a minute. Erica would be charming and sympathetic, and there was a war to win, and they were on the side of the angels. Very well, they would act like angels. She should be able to sell a million war bonds as the grandmother of its first victim. ■

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— OLD AND RIGHT —

I do not believe it is a selfish goal for us to insist that the overriding purpose of all American foreign policy should be the maintenance of the liberty and the peace of the people of the United States, so that they may achieve that intellectual and material improvement which is their genius and in which they can set an example for all people. By that example we can do an even greater service to mankind than we can by billions of material assistance—and more than we can ever do by war.

Just as our nation can be destroyed by war it can also be destroyed by a political or economic policy at home which destroys liberty or breaks down the fiscal and economic structure of the United States. We cannot adopt a foreign policy which gives away all of our people's earnings or imposes such a tremendous burden on the individual American as, in effect, to destroy his incentive and his ability to increase production and productivity in his standard of living. We cannot assume a financial burden in our foreign policy so great that it threatens liberty at home.

It follows that except as such policies may ultimately protect our own security, we have no primary interest as a national policy to improve the conditions or material welfare in other parts of the world or to change other forms of government. Certainly we should not engage in war to achieve such purposes. I don't mean to say that, as responsible citizens of the world, we should not gladly extend charity or assistance to those in need. I do not mean to say that we should not align ourselves with the advocates of freedom everywhere. We did this kind of thing for many years, and we were respected as the most disinterested and charitable nation in the world.

Nor do I believe we can justify war by our natural desire to bring freedom to others throughout the world, although it is perfectly proper to encourage and promote freedom. In 1941 President Roosevelt announced that we were going to establish a moral order throughout the world: freedom of speech and expression, "everywhere in the world"; freedom to worship God "everywhere in the world"; freedom from want, and freedom from fear "everywhere in the world." I pointed out then that the forcing of any special brand of freedom and democracy on a people, whether they want it or not, by the brute force of war will be a denial of those very democratic principles which we are striving to advance.

If we confine our activities to the field of moral leadership we shall be successful if our philosophy is sound and appeals to the people of the world. The trouble with those who advocate this policy is that they really do not confine themselves to moral leadership. They are inspired with the same kind of New Deal planned-control ideas as recent Administrations have desired to enforce at home. In their hearts they want to force on these foreign people through the use of American money and even, perhaps, American arms the policies which moral leadership is able to advance only through the sound strength of its principles and the force of persuasion. I do not think this moral leadership ideal justifies our engaging in any preventive war, or going to the defense of one country against another, or getting ourselves into a vulnerable fiscal and economic position at home which may invite war. I do not believe any policy which has behind it the threat of military force is justified as part of the basic foreign policy of the United States except to defend the liberty of our own people.

—Robert A. Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans*, 1951



Death of the Party

"IT IS A FAR, far better thing that I do than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known." From *A Tale of Two Cities*, Sydney Carton's words, as he rode the tumbrel to the guillotine, came to mind on reading the latest statistics on what open borders has done to a Republican Party that altruistically embraced it.

The Center for Immigration Studies reports that, since 1980, some 25.2 million immigrants have entered legally and been granted permanent status with green cards to work and become citizens.

"Immigration, Political Realignment and the Demise of Republican Political Prospects" is the title of the CIS report, which understates the crisis. Bottom line: the more immigrants in an electoral district, the more grim the GOP prospects. Consider a few of the largest counties in the nation.

Between 1980 and 2008, Los Angeles, No. 1, grew by 2.5 million to 10 million people. The immigrant share went from 22 percent to 41 percent. Over those decades, the GOP share of the presidential vote fell from 52 percent in Ronald Reagan's rout of Jimmy Carter to 29 percent for John McCain.

Orange County, the bastion of Barry Goldwater conservatism, saw its population rise from 1.9 million in 1980 to 3.2 million in 2008, with the immigrant share rising from 13 percent to 34 percent. Reagan swept Orange County with 68 percent. McCain got 50 percent.

Consider Cook County, the nation's second largest. While Cook grew by 350,000 from 1980 to 2008, the character of Chicago changed, with the immigrant share of the population rising from 12 percent to 25 percent. In those 28 years, the GOP share of the presidential vote fell from 40 percent to 23 percent.

In Kings County (Brooklyn), the immigrant share of the population rose from 24 percent to 44 percent, and the Republican share of the presidential vote plummeted from 38 percent to 20 percent.

Nixon and Reagan carried California seven times on presidential tickets. Both carried New York and Illinois in their greatest victories. Yet the GOP has not won one of those three pivotal states in the last five elections.

If California, New York, and Illinois are moving out of reach for GOP presidential candidates, and the party is being annihilated in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, our three largest cities, what of red states Arizona, Texas, and Florida? They are going the same way.

Harris County, Texas, the nation's third-largest, grew by 1.4 million since 1980. Its immigrant population tripled as a share of total population to 25 percent. Where Reagan carried Harris with 58 percent, McCain lost it with 49 percent.

Dallas County added a million people to hit 2.5 million by 2008, as its immigrant population surged from 5 percent to 27 percent. Where Reagan won 59 percent of Dallas County, McCain got only 42 percent.

Phoenix is sited in the fourth most populous county, Maricopa. Its population in 30 years has gone from 1.5 million to 3.8 million. Where 5.5 percent of Maricopa was immigrant in 1980, the percentage is now above 15 percent. And where Reagan carried Maricopa with 65 percent, McCain, an Arizonan, carried Maricopa with only 54 percent.

In Dade (Miami), the immigrant share of the population has gone in 30 years from 36 percent to 58 percent, and the GOP share of the vote has fallen from 60 percent to 42 percent. In Broward (Ft. Lauderdale), legal immigrants tripled as

a share of the population, while the GOP presidential vote fell from 56 percent to 32 percent.

The correlation seems absolute. The more immigrants who come in and become citizens, the more Democratic the country becomes. Why? Almost all immigrants, legal and illegal, are poorer and less skilled than Americans and depend far more upon government.

According to CIS, of recent immigrants who became citizens by 2008, by 55-30 percent they identified as Democrats. Among immigrants who have not yet become citizens, 70 percent identify as Democrats, 15 percent as Republicans. The sooner Democrats get them naturalized, registered, and voting, the sooner the bell tolls for the Grand Old Party.

Is the GOP problem its hard line on illegal immigration? This is a myth. According to a Zogby survey done for CIS, 56 percent of Hispanics and 68 percent of African-Americans say legal immigration is too high. Only 7 percent of Hispanics and 4 percent of African-Americans say it's too low. On no issue is the gulf between elites and the people so wide.

What would be a GOP policy that advanced both the national and party interest? First, an offensive against the administration for laxity in enforcing our immigration laws against businesses that hire illegals. Each time a business is forced to let illegal workers go, the jobs go to some of our 25 million unemployed and underemployed. Second, a Put-Americans-First moratorium on legal immigration until U.S. unemployment falls below 6 percent. And what is Republican Lindsey Graham up to? Collaborating with Sen. Chuck Schumer on a path to citizenship for illegal aliens. ■

Tolerance Mafia

Who watches the hate watchers?

By W. James Antle III

KEN SILVERSTEIN is an unlikely ally for those trying to get control of the nation's borders. A liberal journalist, he finds the Minutemen "crackpots" and Arizona's immigration-hawk Sheriff Joe Arpaio a "kook" whose activities are "reprehensible." Silverstein's wife is Dominican, and he freely admits he does not know whether she originally came to America legally. Yet there he was at the National Press Club on a panel sponsored by the restrictionist Center for Immigration Studies (CIS).

"I have different immigration views than the center," Silverstein said in his presentation. "But I don't believe I have a monopoly on wisdom." What he does believe is that free speech is too important to be shouted down by ersatz civil-rights organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Center. "The SPLC squelches free speech and free debate," Silverstein argued. And, he would add, they raise an awful lot of money from unsuspecting liberals in the process.

Silverstein was there to mark the release of a powerful CIS report entitled "Immigration and the SPLC: How the Southern Poverty Law Center Invented a Smear, Served La Raza, Manipulated the Press, and Duped its Donors." On that last point, Silverstein is something of an expert: he wrote "The Church of Morris Dees" story for *Harper's* a decade ago documenting how Dees, the SPLC's founder, had enriched himself by posing as a defender of racial equality against a rising tide of hate.

What calling could be nobler than working against the cross-burning knuckle-draggers of the Ku Klux Klan?

But the country that elected Barack Obama president is not the America of "Mississippi Burning." Organizations like the Klan have been thoroughly marginalized, their racist ideologies soundly rejected by Americans of all colors and creeds. To raise money as if they constitute anything more than an unpleasant reminder of our Jim Crow past is to perpetuate a fraud.

That's why Dees and his merry band of politically correct enforcers have had to branch out, endlessly expanding the list of "hate groups" to include perfectly mainstream organizations with which they disagree. Advocates of reduced immigration levels and stronger border security are high on the SPLC's list of targets because of the obvious racial component of the immigration issue.

Locating cranks who have made ill-tempered remarks about immigrants is not terribly difficult work for highly trained members of the thought police. But Morris Dees's marauders have not been content to stop there. In late 2007, the SPLC labeled the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) a hate group. This troubling designation by extension tarred organizations like CIS and Roy Beck's NumbersUSA—and quickly achieved its intended chilling effect on the immigration debate.

The SPLC's smear became the centerpiece of the National Council of La Raza's "Stop the Hate" campaign. "Hate" was loosely defined as any position that differed from La Raza's advocacy of loose borders and amnesty for illegal immigrants. La Raza used the SPLC's "findings" to try to silence its critics, and

the mainstream media, always eager to portray conservatives as racists, cheerfully repeated the slur in its woefully biased coverage of the amnesty debate. Stop the Hate claimed its biggest scalp when Lou Dobbs stepped away from his microphone at CNN—by most accounts, a voluntary move, but one hastened by the network's growing discomfort with the controversy surrounding Dobbs's outspoken views on immigration.

FAIR, CIS, and NumbersUSA are far from hate groups. They are wonky, white-paper-generating organizations committed to nothing more controversial than cutting back immigration from its post-1965 high of 1 million new immigrants a year to the more traditional level of 300,000. They shy away from the more racially charged aspects of the debate, which reflects their roots in the wing of the immigration-restrictionist movement animated primarily by environmental and economic concerns rather than blood and soil.

But such facts cannot be allowed to get in the way of a good fundraising mailing—or a malicious attempt to drum certain viewpoints out of polite society. In its fevered writings about immigration reformers, the SPLC has concocted conspiracies so elaborate they would raise eyebrows within the John Birch Society. While the Birchers have David Rockefeller, the SPLC has Michigan environmental activist John Tanton: the "puppeteer" supposedly pulling the strings whenever leading immigration reformers Mark Kirkorian and Roy Beck speak, the all-purpose explanation for why seemingly color-

blind arguments against mass immigration can be readily dismissed as thinly disguised racism.

Krikorian's CIS decided to strike back. Senior fellow Jerry Kammer, a respected journalist who won a Pulitzer Prize for helping to uncover the Congressman Duke Cunningham bribery scandal, wrote their report slashing much of the SPLC's work to ribbons. "The SPLC's decision to smear FAIR was the work of a kangaroo court, one convened to reach a pre-determined verdict by inventing or distorting evidence," Kammer wrote. "The 'Stop the Hate' campaign would more accurately be labeled as a campaign to 'Stop the Debate.'" The tactic is so effective that liberals have begun deploying it in debates on issues with no obvious racial connotations—healthcare reform, deficit spending, and Tea Party protests.

Without denying either the SPLC's good early work on civil rights or the existence of bad actors in the immigration-reform movement, Kammer shows that Dees is no nonpartisan, dispassionate observer of the immigration debate, which may explain why the SPLC only detects hate on one side of the issue despite ample evidence of racist remarks by La Raza radicals. Kammer also skillfully debunks the SPLC's immigration conspiracy theory, conceding that Tanton has occasionally been reckless in his statements and associations but documenting that the SPLC has inflated both the charges against the early immigration reformer and his influence on the contemporary movement.

Kammer's report also focuses on an aspect of the SPLC long denounced by liberal magazines and newspapers—the excessive fundraising that has won Morris Dees a place in the Direct Marketing Association Hall of Fame but no comparable honor in the civil-rights movement. The SPLC took in over \$32 million in contributions in 2008, an aver-

age of \$88,755 per day. At the end of the 2008 fiscal year, the SPLC had more than \$174 million in the bank even after its investments lost over \$48 million in the financial crisis.

The CIS report claims Dees promised to stop his profligate fundraising after the SPLC's endowment exceeded \$50 million, but continued shaking the money tree after it reached \$200 million. The group's lavish headquarters, nicknamed the "Poverty Pentagon," have made it a laughingstock among erstwhile allies on the Left. *The Nation* called Dees "a millionaire huckster"; left-wing journalist Alexander Coburn dubbed him the "arch-salesman of hate-mongering." "Morris Dees does not need your financial support," Silverstein wrote in *Harper's*. "The SPLC is already the wealthiest civil rights group in America. ... The American Institute of Philanthropy gives the SPLC one of the worst ratings of any group it monitors."

"Hate sells; poor people don't, which is why readers who go to the SPLC's website will find only a handful of cases on such non-lucrative causes as fair housing, worker safety, or healthcare, many of those from the 1970s and 1980s," JoAnn Wypijewski wrote in *The Nation* in 2001. "Why the organization continues to keep 'Poverty' (or even 'Law') in its name can be ascribed only to nostalgia or a cynical understanding of the marketing possibilities in class guilt." At the CIS event, Silverstein quoted a civil-rights attorney as calling Dees's operation "the Jim and Tammy Faye Baker of the civil-rights movement. And I don't mean to demean Jim and Tammy Faye."

Even some of the SPLC's legitimate civil-rights work was exploited for profit. In 1987, Dees won a \$7 million verdict against a Klan group that had brutally murdered a young black man. The *Montgomery Advertiser* reported that the SPLC "used nationwide fundraising letters to create the image of a

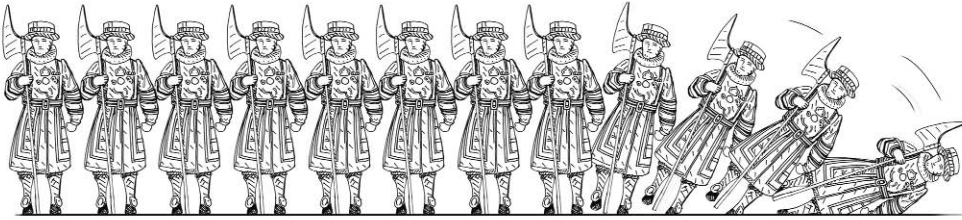
mighty Klan that actually had \$7 million" to pay the victim's mother. In fact, the woman only received about \$52,000, most of which she had to pay back to the SPLC, which had given her an interest-free loan. Meanwhile, the SPLC raised \$9 million in two years from mailings highlighting her case.

The SPLC's antics, ranging from the above outrage to the merely absurd—Dees signing fundraising letters to Jewish potential donors as "Morris Seligman Dees"—harm more than guilty liberals' wallets. To the extent that our current immigration policy is not in the national interest, the SPLC stands in the way of a solution. And it may ultimately foster the racism it claims to oppose.

Consider the case of Carol Swain, an African-American law professor at Vanderbilt who has been sounding the alarm about "the new white nationalism." Because she approaches the subject from a scholarly rather than a fundraising perspective, she has raised the SPLC's hackles. "When my face was smeared across the papers in my state with accusations that I was an apologist for white supremacy, I thought it was time to get involved," Swain said at the CIS press conference. Driving the immigration debate underground, she argued, will silence legitimate restrictionists and empower genuine racists.

Swain concluded, "If we are concerned about extremists, the best thing we can do is include their voices in the dialogue. ... [The SPLC] is actually making more converts to extremist organizations than they would if they let them talk about their concerns." For years, Morris Dees has been expanding the number of hate groups on his fundraising lists. It would be a tragic result if his tactics helped them proliferate in real life. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.



Heir to Blair

Such was David Cameron's poor showing in the polls at the beginning of March that irresponsible elements here began to suggest that Boris Johnson might make a

better leader of the Tory Party.

You know the guy I mean: Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, Old Etonian mayor of London, former editor of the *Spectator*, former Tory MP for Henley, and Britain's most reckless, anarchic, and entertaining politician.

He is also ... well, take your pick. He describes himself as "a one-man melting pot." His forebears include Turks, Russians, Frenchmen, and Germans; also Englishmen. His faith background is Protestant and Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim. He is an American citizen, moreover, having had the foresight to be born in New York City in June 1964. Through his father's maternal grandmother, Marie Louise de Pfeffel, he is a descendant of George II, grandfather of the rather more famous George III.

With that pedigree, as you might expect, the mayor of London has a keen sense of the absurd and once promised, "If you vote for the Conservatives, your wife will get bigger breasts and your chances of driving a BMW M3 will increase." But there is one thing he won't be frivolous about: his career or, as he might see it, his destiny. Being mayor of the greatest city on earth is by no means the summit of his ambition. He wants not just to lead his party but to lead it into No. 10 Downing Street; to become prime minister.

First, however, David Cameron must lose May's general election, and I am not sure that he can be relied on to do that. Many now talk of a hung Parliament,

even of a Tory defeat, but my hunch is that Cameron will win outright. After all, his beautiful wife Samantha is expecting a baby in September. Given the state of the nation after 13 years of Labor rule, however, Cameron should be able to walk it, even without a baby. We are in the middle of the worst recession in living memory; we are fighting an unpopular and unwinnable war in Afghanistan, having lost an equally unwinnable and unpopular war in Iraq; and we have brooding over us the bulky figure of Gordon Brown, perhaps the least charismatic prime minister in history. At the beginning of last year, the Tories were 20 points ahead in the polls, but for a couple of days in March this year, that lead dropped to two points.

Why? There are signs of economic recovery, and Brown and his Chancellor Alastair Darling have, rightly, been given some of the credit. Bottom line, though, is that the Tories are still not trusted. They are still seen in too many quarters as the "nasty party"—the party of hangers and bashers, the party that in 1964 gave us Peter Griffiths, who won Smethwick, in Birmingham, after campaigning on the slogan "If you want a nigger for a neighbor, vote Labor."

At the Tory spring conference in Brighton, Cameron sought to decontaminate the brand once and for all when he declared, "We can now look the British people in the eye and say: this country, our country, this tolerant, compassionate, brilliant, multi-racial country, we are

with you, we are like you, we are for you, we are ready to serve you; this modern Conservative party made its choice and it's never going back."

That sort of talk does not convince skeptics, but it does drive away conservatives. Dave is sounding like Tony Blair in 1997, and indeed has described himself as the "heir to Blair." His education spokesman and star performer, Michael Gove, is another Blairite. In mid-March he said that the Tories now embodied "Blairism at its best." The party, he said, was offering what Labor offered in 1997—the "message that politics could be different, that fairness and wealth could go hand-in-hand."

What can you say? Only that Cameron and the Tories do not deserve to win the election. Their policies—not least their social policies—are virtually indistinguishable from Labor's. In an interview in the March issue of the glossy gay magazine *Attitude*, Cameron said that if "our Lord Jesus" were alive today he would support gay rights. I am not making this up.

Not that Boris Johnson would take the party in a more conservative direction—he is a libertarian. But he would at least avoid some of Dave's pious drivel and would, most importantly, be able to cash in on the public's great dislike of the Iraq War. As a Tory MP, Boris voted for the war, but he has not joined those on the Right who rationalize their support by saying that war was right in principle even if it was wrong in execution. Boris simply says that the war was wrong and that he was wrong. "If I had my time over again, I certainly would not vote for it," he now says. "I regret it. It was a colossal mistake." ■

Graceful Decline

The end of Pax Americana

By Christopher Layne

THE UNITED STATES emerged from World War II in a position of global dominance. From this unparalleled military and economic power came a Pax Americana that has endured for more than six decades. It seemed the sun would never set on the U.S. empire.

But America is increasingly unable to play the hegemon's assigned role. Militarily, a hegemon is responsible for stabilizing key regions and guarding the global commons. Economically, it offers public goods by opening its domestic market to other states, supplying liquidity for the world economy, and providing the reserve currency. A hegemon is supposed to solve international crises, not cause them. It is supposed to be the lender of last resort, not the biggest borrower. Faced with wars it cannot win or quit and an economy begging rescue, the United States no longer fits the part.

Still, many in the mainstream foreign-policy community see these as temporary setbacks and believe that U.S. primacy will endure for years to come. The American people are awakening to a new reality more quickly than the academy. According to a December 2009 Pew survey, 41 percent of the public believes that the U.S. plays a less important and powerful role as a world leader than it did a decade ago.

The epoch of American dominance is drawing to a close, and international politics is entering a period of transition: no longer unipolar but not yet fully multipolar. President Barack Obama's November 2009 trip to China provided both substantive and emblematic evi-

dence of the shift. As the *Financial Times* observed, "Coming at a moment when Chinese prestige is growing and the U.S. is facing enormous difficulties, Mr. Obama's trip has symbolized the advent of a more multi-polar world where U.S. leadership has to co-exist with several rising powers, most notably China." In the same Pew study, 44 percent of Americans polled said that China was the leading economic power; just 27 percent chose the United States.

Much of America's decline can be attributed to its own self-defeating policies, but as the U.S. stumbles, others—notably China, India, and Russia—are rising. This shift in the global balance of power will dramatically affect international politics: the likelihood of intense great-power security competitions—and even war—will increase; the current era of globalization will end; and the post-1945 Pax Americana will be replaced by an international order that reflects the interests, values, and norms of emerging powers.

China's economy has been growing much more rapidly than the United States' over the last two decades and continues to do so, maintaining audacious 8 percent growth projections in the midst of a global recession. Leading economic forecasters predict that it will overtake the U.S. as the world's largest economy, measured by overall GDP, sometime around 2020. Already in 2008, China passed the U.S. as the world's leading manufacturing nation—a title the United States had enjoyed for over a century—and this year China will displace Japan as

the world's second-largest economy. Everything we know about the trajectories of rising great powers tells us that China will use its increasing wealth to build formidable military power and that it will seek to become the dominant power in East Asia.

Optimists contend that once the U.S. recovers from what historian Niall Ferguson calls the "Great Repression"—not quite a depression but more than a recession—we'll be able to answer the Chinese challenge. The country, they remind us, faced a larger debt-GDP ratio after World War II yet embarked on an era of sustained growth. They forget that the postwar era was a golden age of U.S. industrial and financial dominance, trade surpluses, and persistent high growth rates. Those days are gone. The United States of 2010 and the world in which it lives are far different from those of 1945.

Weaknesses in the fundamentals of the American economy have been accumulating for more than three decades. In the 1980s, these problems were acutely diagnosed by a number of writers—notably David Calleo, Paul Kennedy, Robert Gilpin, Samuel Huntington, and James Chace—who predicted that these structural ills would ultimately erode the economic foundations of America's global preeminence. A spirited late-1980s debate was cut short, when, in quick succession, the Soviet Union collapsed, Japan's economic bubble burst, and the U.S. experienced an apparent economic revival during the Clinton administration. Now the delayed day of reckoning is fast approaching.

Even in the best case, the United States will emerge from the current crisis with fundamental handicaps. The Federal Reserve and Treasury have pumped massive amounts of dollars into circulation in hope of reviving the economy. Add to that the \$1 trillion-plus budget deficits that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicts the United States will incur for at least a decade. When the projected deficits are bundled with the persistent U.S. current-account deficit, the entitlements overhang (the unfunded future liabilities of Medicare and Social Security), and the cost of the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is reason to worry about the United States' fiscal stability. As the CBO says, "Even if the recovery occurs as projected and the stimulus bill is allowed to expire, the country will face the highest debt/GDP ratio in 50 years and an increasingly unsustainable and urgent fiscal problem."

The dollar's vulnerability is the United States' geopolitical Achilles' heel. Its role as the international economy's reserve currency ensures American preeminence, and if it loses that status, hegemony will be literally unaffordable. As Cornell professor Jonathan Kirshner observes, the dollar's vulnerability "presents potentially significant and underappreciated restraints upon contemporary American political and military predominance."

Fears for the dollar's long-term health predated the current financial and economic crisis. The meltdown has amplified them and highlighted two new factors that bode ill for continuing reserve-currency status. First, the other big financial players in the international economy are either military rivals (China) or ambiguous allies (Europe) that have their own ambitions and no longer require U.S. protection from the Soviet threat. Second, the dollar faces an uncertain future because of concerns

that its value will diminish over time. Indeed, China, which has holdings estimated at nearly \$2 trillion, is worried that America will leave it with huge piles of depreciated dollars. China's vote of no confidence is reflected in its recent calls to create a new reserve currency.

In coming years, the U.S. will be under increasing pressure to defend the dollar by preventing runaway inflation. This will require it to impose fiscal self-discipline through some combination of budget cuts, tax increases, and interest-rate hikes. Given that the last two options could choke off renewed growth, there is likely to be strong pressure to slash the federal budget.

THE UNITED STATES WILL BE **COMPELLED TO OVERHAUL ITS STRATEGY** DRAMATICALLY, AND RATHER THAN **HAVING THIS ADJUSTMENT FORCED UPON IT** SUDDENLY BY A MAJOR CRISIS, THE U.S. SHOULD **GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE.**

But it will be almost impossible to make meaningful cuts in federal spending without deep reductions in defense expenditures. Discretionary non-defense domestic spending accounts for only about 20 percent of annual federal outlays. So the United States will face obvious "guns or butter" choices. As Kirshner puts it, the absolute size of U.S. defense expenditures are "more likely to be decisive in the future when the U.S. is under pressure to make real choices about taxes and spending. When borrowing becomes more difficult, and adjustment more difficult to postpone, choices must be made between raising taxes, cutting non-defense spending, and cutting defense spending." Faced with these hard decisions, Americans will find themselves afflicted with hegemony fatigue.

The United States will be compelled to overhaul its strategy dramatically, and rather than having this adjustment forced upon it suddenly by a major

crisis, the U.S. should get ahead of the curve by shifting its position in a gradual, orderly fashion. A new American global posture would involve strategic retrenchment, burden-shifting, and abandonment of the so-called "global counterinsurgency" being waged in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As a first step, the U.S. will need to pull back from its current security commitments to NATO, Japan, and South Korea. This is not isolationism. The United States undertook the defense of these regions under conditions very different from those prevailing today. In the late 1940s, all were threatened by the Soviet Union—in the case of South

Korea and Japan, by China as well—and were too weak to defend themselves. The U.S. did the right thing by extending its security umbrella and "drawing a line in the sand" to contain the Soviet Union. But these commitments were never intended to be permanent. They were meant as a temporary shield to enable Western Europe, Japan, and South Korea to build up their own economic and military strength and assume responsibility for defending themselves.

There are several explanations for why the U.S. did not follow through with this policy. Fundamentally, during the Pax Americana there was no need. As the U.S. declines, however, it will be compelled to return to its original intent. If we remember that an eventual pull-back was the goal of U.S. policy, strategic retrenchment in the early 21st century looks less like a radical break than a fulfillment of strategic goals adopted in the late 1940s.

Burden-shifting—not burden-sharing—is the obvious corollary of strategic retrenchment. American policy should seek to compel our allies to assume responsibility for their own security and take the lead role in providing security in their regions. To implement this strategic devolution, the U.S. should disengage gradually from its current commitments in order to give an adequate transition period for its allies to step up to the plate. It should facilitate this transition by providing advanced weapons and military technology to friendly states in Europe and Asia.

With respect to Islamic terrorism, we need to keep our priorities straight. Terrorism is not the most pressing national-security threat facing the United States. Great powers can be defeated only by other great powers—not by nonstate terrorists or by minor powers. The U.S. needs to be careful not to pay more attention to Islamic terrorists than to emerging great powers. Here the Obama administration and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates are getting it wrong.

Although many in the U.S. foreign-policy community—especially the counterinsurgency lobby, based at the Center for a New American Security, and the American Enterprise Institute—call for the U.S. to “win” the war on terror, there can be no decisive victory over terrorism. The trick is finding the right strategy to minimize its effects on American security. The strategy of the Bush and Obama administrations—invading and occupying Iraq and Afghanistan—is exactly the wrong approach. The U.S. is bad at counterinsurgency. Foreign occupying powers seldom are good at it, which is the main reason big powers usually lose these kinds of small wars. The U.S. also is not good at nation-building. Rather than quelling terrorism, a long-term foreign military presence in places like Iraq and Afghanistan inflames nationalism and anti-Americanism.

The Nobel Prize-winning Columbia University economist Joseph Stiglitz and his co-author Linda Bilmes have estimated that the direct and indirect costs of the Iraq War will exceed \$3 trillion. No similar projection of the Afghanistan war’s costs exists. But the Obama administration’s fall 2009 internal debate about whether to increase troop levels in Afghanistan offered a preview of coming attractions. During these deliberations, some officials argued that the U.S. needed to limit its commitment because the cost of the war effort has serious budgetary implications. According to the *New York Times*, when presented with an OMB projection that showed existing troop deployments and nation-building expenses combined with the cost of sending an additional 40,000 troops to Afghanistan for a decade would total \$1 trillion, “the president seemed in sticker shock, watching his domestic agenda vanishing in front of him.”

That the United States needs a post-Pax Americana foreign policy should be obvious. But there is no guarantee that the U.S. will adjust to a transforming world. Even as the globe is being turned upside down by material factors, the foreign policies of individual states are shaped by the ideas leaders hold about their own nations’ identity and place in world politics. More than most, America’s foreign policy is the product of such ideas, and U.S. foreign-policy elites have constructed their own myths of empire to justify the United States’ hegemonic role. To move successfully to a post-Pax Americana foreign policy, Americans will need to move beyond these myths.

The foundational American myth of empire is exceptionalism, the belief, dating back to the Puritans, that the U.S. is different, better, and morally superior to the rest of the world. Americans have always looked at the outside world sus-

piciously and viewed it as a source of contagion: war, imperialism, militarism, religious intolerance, non-democratic forms of governance, and latterly totalitarianism, genocide, and terrorism. All these bad things, we believe, come from “over there.”

We have long thought that we cannot live safely in a world of such imperfections and that it is therefore our national duty to cure these ills by using American power to construct a world order based on our values. U.S. foreign-policy elites have extrapolated from our national experience and concluded, as Edmund Stillman and William Pfaff wrote some 45 years ago, that the United States is a model for the world and “America’s wants and values are universal”—a point George W. Bush made repeatedly in justifying his policy of exporting democracy at the point of a bayonet. Americans believe that our political and economic systems provide “a prototypical solution for the world’s disorders.” If we could just give the rest of the world a makeover so it looked like the United States, all would be well.

These assumptions invest American foreign policy with a tendency to see the world in terms of good versus evil. And because the U.S. looks through this prism, it believes it has the obligation to prevail in this global struggle. America’s security and way of life are purportedly endangered by the existence of hostile ideologies anywhere in the world because peace and freedom are allegedly indivisible. Intervention is thus the United States’ default in foreign policy.

We attempt to tame the world by exporting democracy because—we are told—democracies do not fight each other. We export our model of free-market capitalism because—we are told—states that are economically interdependent do not fight each other. We work multilaterally through interna-

tional institutions because—we are told—these promote cooperation and trust among states. None of these propositions is self-evident. Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence that they are wrong. But they are illusions that “express the deepest beliefs which Americans, as a nation, hold about the world.” So we cling to the idea that our hegemony is necessary for our own and everyone else’s security. The consequence has been to contribute to the very imperial overstretch that is accelerating the United States’ decline.

Because that U.S. enjoyed such vast superiority for such a long time, it had the luxury of acting on its delusions without paying too high a price. (That is, if you discount the 58,000 names on the Vietnam Memorial or the tens of thousands of U.S. military personnel who have suffered disfiguring wounds or been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.) But as my graduate school mentor, Kenneth Waltz, one of the towering figures in the study of international politics, used to tell us about American foreign policy, “When you are big, strong, and powerful, you can afford to make the same dumb mistakes over and over again. But when your power declines, you begin to pay a price for repeating your mistakes.”

U.S. decline means that in the 21st century, the United States will pay a high price if it endlessly repeats its mistakes. To change our foreign policy—to come to grips with the end of the Pax Americana—we first need to change the way we see the world. ■

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The National Security Council is increasingly concerned that Israel might attempt to involve the United States in a war against Iran.

It has gamed two possible scenarios. The first involves a straightforward Israeli air attack on Iranian targets, inviting retaliation by Tehran against U.S. forces in the region. The United States’ only way to stop such a development would be to shoot down the Israeli aircraft as they cross Iraqi airspace, a step that President Obama could not possibly survive politically. The second scenario is that the Israelis might stage a false-flag clandestine operation, attacking U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf while disguised as Iranians to bring about a conflict in which Israel would ostensibly be uninvolved. As Israel has a history of such operations and there have been some intelligence indicators that its government might be thinking that way, this possibility is being taken seriously. Joint Chiefs Chairman Mike Mullen has repeatedly told the Israeli government in private and in the strongest terms that the U.S. does not want a war with Iran, and, based on intelligence suggesting a possible false-flag operation, has specifically warned that the Pentagon will be watching for a USS *Liberty* scenario. Mullen’s warning was intended to convey that Washington would respond by exposing Israeli involvement if such an attack were to take place. The *Liberty* was deliberately attacked by unmarked Israeli aircraft and warships in June 1967, killing 34 American sailors and Marines, but a cover-up inquiry engineered by President Lyndon Johnson concluded that the attack had been a case of mistaken identity.



The cost of putting an intelligence officer into the field has skyrocketed,

one of the unfortunate results of 9/11 and growth in government. Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data reveals that four out of five government jobs now pay more than comparable positions in the private sector. An average government employee costs taxpayers \$125,000 a year when all legacy costs are taken into account. Federal benefit packages, which include healthcare and retirement, are far more generous than those in the private sector, and hardly anyone gets fired.

The intelligence profession is even more expensive than the usual government job, and the intel community has grown by about a third since Sept. 11. A mid-level CIA officer’s base salary is between \$89,000 and \$136,000. On top of that, there is frequently overtime pay, danger and/or hardship pay, language pay, free housing, entertainment and staff allowances, and, in many overseas assignments, a government car, referred to as a “quasi-personal vehicle.” The Agency must also pay rent on the office space it uses in State Department-operated buildings, and the buildings themselves are five times more expensive than they were in the 1990s due to security enhancements.

In spite of the hype about danger, most CIA assignments, even to zones of conflict, are far from hazardous, with officers operating out of fortress-like embassies or barbed-wire-encircled compounds protected by armed guards. Driving a Prius is considerably more dangerous than most jobs with the CIA.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow with the American Conservative Defense Alliance.

Dear Diary

By Hillary Rodham Clinton

Feb. 8, 2009: My speech at the Rotary Club of Ulan-Bator about Iran's nuclear ambitions is warmly received.

The increasing tension around Iran's situation demands a diplomatic solution. Now is the time for negotiation, goodwill, and patience. Yes, the situation is delicate, so all the more need for sensitive and tactful engagement. Of course, what makes it so difficult is that this Ahmadinejad is a dangerously unstable fanatic who's worse than Hitler. Honestly, he calls himself a national leader but can't even be bothered to shave! I think this terrorist better straighten up, or he'll be eating cluster bombs for breakfast one of these mornings, honestly!

Five minutes later, the red cell phone starts buzzing like a beehive. Frankly, I think it's sad how some men feel they have to control everything.

April 18, 2009: My words at an NGO forum in Kabul garner another standing ovation.

Never forget that in 2001, we toppled the Taliban for the sake of the children. And when every last Afghan child has access to affordable healthcare, a quality education, psychological counseling, accredited nutritionists, dalcroze instructors, certified speech therapists—Pashto is a notoriously difficult language! I don't know how these amazing kids do it, but I sup-

pose that's just one more lesson children can teach us!—and when these at-risk Afghan children also have unrestricted access to piano instructors and swim coaches, then our work here will be done. Fortunately, we expect to fully actualize these objectives in 18 months, possibly less. For now let us never forget what an enriching, growthful experience it has been to assist the U.S. military in pacifying this nation of savage terrorists and uplifting its underserved children.

Feb. 2, 2009: Throughout history, gifts have been essential to diplomacy. A record of those given and some received:

To signal a fresh start in good relations between Russia and the United States, we gave President Medvedev an actual reset button marked "rectoscopya," or "reset!" But as luck would have it, "rectoscopya" turns out to mean "proctoscopy." (Why did I believe Joe Biden when he said he knew Russian?) But there is, as always, a bright side; Prime Minister Putin has graciously offered Bill and me complementary proctoscopies at South Ural Teaching Hospital, a lovely gesture!

April 18, 2009: For Kurmanbeck Bakiyev, president of Kyrgyzstan and a dear, dear friend of the United States, a package of delicious pork jerky from Carbondale, Illinois, the kind my brother and I used to fight over in the backseat of the car as children. And thank goodness I managed to black out

the sell-by date just before giving it to him—a few months won't matter, honestly!

Tatyana, his glamorous and accomplished wife, presents me a glorious carpet patterned with figures of reindeer, Kalashnikovs, and Pamela Anderson. Most remarkable of all, the rug was woven entirely by children—just one more lesson Kyrgyzstanis can teach us!

Jan. 23, 2010: To Jacob Zuma of South Africa I present an almost new paperback of *Roots* that we got with no time to spare at the Dulles newsstand. (And I peel off the "50% off!" sticker just in time!) I certainly hope it will be a growthful experience for him and perhaps teach him something about his own roots. There is so much that books can teach us. He graciously offered us his fifth and sixth wives, and though I politely declined, I was touched by the gesture.

Feb. 19, 2010: For President Sarkozy of France, a box of Entenmann's cookies, one of Bill's favorites. We didn't have time to wrap it because we've just been terribly busy lately, and Sarkozy was very understanding. I couldn't help noticing he did not offer any gift in return, but I suppose we must give our allies, like our spouses, an occasional pass for bad manners.

Dec. 4, 2009: My words to the press en route to Tokyo show once again that most men simply cannot handle straight talk from a woman.

Engaging with North Korea is of course a top priority in guaranteeing security for our allies in East Asia. The situation is very delicate, and we have to address it with careful diplomacy, with plenty of carrots as well as the occasional stick. But we're confident we can find common ground. By the way, how old is Kim Jong-Il again? Well, I guess we won't have wait long for a changing of the guard, now will we? We hope that the next one is a lot better than the nasty four-eyed midget we have to deal with now, and we look forward to that opportunity very, very much.

An hour later and the red cell phone is buzzing again, even at 12,000 feet over the Pacific. I didn't know they could do that!

Feb. 18, 2010: Like many working mothers, I have learned how to be ruthlessly efficient. This morning I set up a conference call with the foreign ministers of China, Russia, India, Japan, France, Turkey, Mexico, and South Africa.

"Are we all here? China, you too? Yes? Great. OK. I regret to inform you all that if you don't join us in imposing sanctions against Iran, you will all soon find yourselves excluded from the family of nations and facing diplomatic isolation. Is that clear? Wonderful. Have a great weekend, everybody!"

Dear old Bibi, whom I had patched in, told me I that I was just marvelous and that he still wishes I were president. I'm sure he's not the only one! ■

—as told to Chase Madar

Hillary Rodham Clinton is secretary of state. Chase Madar is a lawyer in New York.

Protect & Serve

The Oath Keepers have more in common with Henry David Thoreau than Timothy McVeigh.

By Jesse Walker

MOTHER JONES SAYS they represent "the Age of Treason." Bill O'Reilly believes they're "pretty extreme." When Rob Waters of the Southern Poverty Law Center wrote about the group, he called on the government to "ensure that the armed forces are not inadvertently training future domestic terrorists."

They're talking about the Oath Keepers, a coalition of current and former military, police, and other public officials. And what treasonous, terrorist tactic have these extremists adopted? They have pledged not to obey unconstitutional commands.

Search the group's founding document and the closest thing you will find to a call to violence is the statement that, should a dictatorship be imposed and a popular uprising break out, its members will not only refuse to fire on the dissenters but will "join them in fighting against those who dare attempt to enslave them." And even then the "fighting" needn't necessarily be armed. (They also say they aren't "advocating or promoting violence towards any organization, group or person.") Otherwise, the manifesto is a call to stand down, not to rise up. Not every Oath Keeper would appreciate the comparison, but the group has more in common with those dissidents of the '60s who refused to go to war than with any paramilitary cell.

If you wanted to find a theoretical discussion of Oath Keepers' plans, you wouldn't turn to a text on terrorism or guerrilla warfare. You would open the

second book of Gene Sharp's three-volume classic on civil disobedience, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, and turn to the section headlined "Action by Government Personnel." In "an essentially nonviolent struggle," Sharp writes, "a mutiny may express itself entirely through the refusal to carry out usual functions of forcing the regime's will on the populace or waging war against a foreign enemy." In addition, "police or others may selectively refuse certain orders on a scale too limited to be described accurately as mutiny." The examples he offers range from the British occupation of India, where a regiment refused to fire on a peaceful protest, to the Nazi occupation of Norway, where policemen frequently flouted the Germans' orders.

In the current case, there are ten commands the Oath Keepers have forsworn. Those who join the group must refuse

- to disarm the American people
- to conduct warrantless searches of the American people, their homes, vehicles, papers, or effects
- to detain American citizens as "unlawful enemy combatants" or to subject them to trial by military tribunal
- to impose martial law or a "state of emergency" on a state, or to enter with force into a state, without the express consent and invitation of that state's legislature and governor

- to invade and subjugate any state that asserts its sovereignty and declares the national government to be in violation of the compact by which that state entered the Union
- to blockade American cities, thus turning them into giant concentration camps
- to force American citizens into any form of detention camps under any pretext
- to assist or support the use of any foreign troops on U.S. soil against the American people
- to confiscate the property of the American people, including food and other essential supplies, under any emergency pretext whatsoever
- to do anything that would “infringe on the right of the people to free speech, to peaceably assemble, and to petition their government for a redress of grievances”

Looking at that list, three things immediately come to mind. The first is that resisting such orders should not be controversial—or at the very least, should not be considered outside the boundaries of normal debate. The item about states asserting sovereignty will raise hackles in some quarters, though it’s rooted in the fact that several legislatures are considering resolutions that lean in that direction. Otherwise these are orders that anyone with civil-libertarian instincts would reject on their face. Appearing on MSNBC in March, *Crazy for God* author Frank Schaeffer dismissed the group as malcontents who think they could “break the law and not follow orders if they don’t like what they’re being told.” But these are not merely instructions the members “don’t like.” They are commands that would be illegal under the Constitution.

Second, some of the orders are not

very likely. Membership in the Oath Keepers often correlates with an affinity for dubious conspiracy theories, and that in turn has led the group to embrace some fears without much foundation. Despite decades of rumors, the feds have yet to reestablish the internment camps that held Japanese-American citizens in World War II. And the chances that foreign troops will occupy American soil any time in the near future are pretty low—though if they do show up, I’ll gladly endorse the Oath Keepers’ refusal to assist them.

WHEN VICTIMS OF THE STORM ATTEMPTED TO FLEE ACROSS THE CRESCENT CITY CONNECTION BRIDGE TO JEFFERSON PARISH, THEY WERE FORCED BACK BY ARMED AGENTS OF THE GRETN, LOUISIANA POLICE.

Third, several of the other orders are likely. Indeed, some have already happened. If the Oath Keepers are overly prone to see secret plots against our liberties, that’s because open plots against our liberties have been so successful. American police forces infringe on free speech and assembly at almost every major political summit. An American citizen, José Padilla, was famously tried before a military tribunal as an enemy combatant. Cops confiscated legal firearms from peaceful citizens following Hurricane Katrina. And speaking of Katrina, if you thought the item about blockading cities belonged on the “not very likely” list, think again. When victims of the storm attempted to flee across the Crescent City Connection bridge to Jefferson Parish, they were forced back by armed agents of the Gretna, Louisiana police. If there had been some Oath Keepers on the force that day, those refugees might have escaped the devastation.

If the Oath Keepers’ agenda isn’t objectionable, why the panic? Partly it’s the general fear of “right-wing extremists”

that has taken hold of so much of the media, a narrative that allows ordinarily sensible people to conflate all manner of dissident groups. (Obviously, you needn’t be on the Right to join the Oath Keepers, but the membership does tilt in that direction.) There’s also a suspicion that the group’s concern with civil liberties is only skin deep. If they’re so committed to constitutional protections, critics ask, where were they during the Bush years?

In fact, while the group wasn’t launched until early 2009, it had been germinating for a while. The founder—a

veteran, Yale law grad, and former Ron Paul aide named Stewart Rhodes—spoke out about the state of civil liberties throughout the Bush era, writing angrily about the militarization of police work, the expansion of federal power during wartime, and the repression that followed Hurricane Katrina. In 2007, for example, he warned that “the Pentagon and its close allies, the defense contractors, turned to the ‘war on drugs’ and ‘terrorism’ as the new cash-crop reason for the bloated Pentagon budget”—not exactly a standard Red Team complaint. There may be people in the organization who showed little concern for the Bill of Rights from the first month of 2001 through the first month of 2009. But that problem isn’t found at the top.

Some of the group’s critics claim that even if it isn’t violent, Oath Keepers could inflame people who are. Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* that he wasn’t “accusing Stewart Rhodes or any member of his group of being Timothy McVeigh or a future Tim-

othy McVeigh.” But the organization was spreading paranoia, he argued, and “these kinds of conspiracy theories are what drive a small number of people to criminal violence.”

Radical rhetoric does sometimes attract shady characters, and in two cases people linked to the Oath Keepers have been charged with criminal violence. The first occurred in April 2009, when Daniel Knight Hayden—or “Citizen Quasar,” as he called himself—declared his support for the Oath Keepers on his Twitter feed while also announcing his plans to start a shootout at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Hayden wasn’t a part of the organization, though, and Rhodes quickly denounced him as a “nutbag.”

More recently, a man who did have ties to the group—Marine Sgt. Charles Dyer—was arrested on child-molestation charges. While searching his house, police found a grenade launcher that officials say was stolen from a military base. Rhodes quickly distanced himself from the accused, but not very adeptly: he scrubbed references to Dyer from the Oath Keepers’ website, including one that said the man would “represent” the group at a Tea Party rally. After the arrest, Rhodes announced that Dyer “never became an actual member” of the organization since Rhodes disapproved of Dyer’s plan “to train and help organize private militias across the country when he got out of the Marines.” That may be true. Still, Dyer was clearly associated with Rhodes’s group. More importantly, if Dyer is guilty on the weapons charge, that might seem to support the position that the Oath Keeper worldview encourages insurrectionary force.

But there are two problems with Potok’s thesis. The first is that there isn’t any sign that the organization drove Hayden or Dyer to violence. Hayden was unhinged to begin with, and he was spouting New World Order theories long before the Oath Keepers existed; they

were simply one convenient symbol to grab as he justified his plans. Rhodes did everything he could after Hayden’s arrest to make it clear that such kamikaze assaults were not what his operation was about. Hayden was “threatening to kill police officers,” he noted, and that’s “not very compatible with an organization made up of police officers and military. That’s not even an example of someone ‘taking it too far,’ it is comparing apples to oranges.” Dyer, too, was interested in the conspiracy theories that worry Potok before he encountered the Oath Keepers. And if he is guilty of the charges against him, he was a criminally violent person to begin with. He is accused, after all, of raping a 7-year-old girl.

That leads to the second problem with Potok’s theory. As he suggests, the set of people attracted to violence overlaps with the set of people attracted to anti-government sentiments. The set of people attracted to violence also overlaps with the set of people who work for the government itself. Oath Keepers is in the rare position of pushing both groups

toward nonviolence—of telling the rebels that there’s an alternative to lashing out and of telling officials with guns that there’s an alternative to mindlessly following orders.

You can criticize the Oath Keepers for being too indulgent of fringy fears or for handling the Dyer situation poorly. But what Potok calls “these kinds of conspiracy theories” are already out there. If you’re attracted to them, the Oath Keepers will inform you that there’s a peaceful way to resist illegitimate authority. At the same time, the group concerns itself with a subject that doesn’t seem to interest Potok at all, even though it’s one of the chief reasons such theories spread in the first place: the aggressive violence of the people in power. In a time of indefinite detentions, indiscriminate SWAT raids, and increasingly militarized disaster response, the Oath Keepers’ anxieties make much more sense than the anxieties of the group’s loudest critics. ■

Jesse Walker is managing editor of Reason.

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Democracy Delusion

The West's interests aren't always best served by one man, one vote.

By Peter Hitchens

HOW MANY Islamic republics would you like? How many do you think the world needs? Spreading democracy across the Muslim world—as so many enlightened people say they wish to do—should certainly increase the number. Yet the enthusiasts for planting democracy all over the planet also tend to be the people who dislike Islamic republics and warn endlessly about their likely use as bases for terror.

How on earth are we to make sense of this contradiction? Are we once again in the realm of doublethink, the invariable result of dogma? If so, is the dogma a dangerous one?

I have in the past few years visited several countries where democracy will, if unfettered, favor political Islam. The supposed Cedar Revolution in Lebanon received gushing praise from Western commentators. There was even talk of genuine elections in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood would be the most likely beneficiary of majority rule. As for the Palestinian entity, the angry irredentists of Hamas undoubtedly won the democratic contest, and their control of Gaza is a clear expression of the people's will. Did the United States really want a Shia Muslim state in Iraq?

Then there was Pakistan, where Western idealists encouraged the return of the Oxford-educated Benazir Bhutto and her husband, despite their past failures in government, and applauded the removal of the military tyrant Pervez Musharraf. Mrs. Bhutto was foully murdered, an incident that underlined the instability of that unhappy country. But

the experiment in democracy continued, and Pakistan has been seething with Islamic revolt. For historical reasons, it has a special army unit trained to mount coups d'état, and there is little doubt that if the Islamists get out of control, that unit will do its duty again, presumably to the relief of all opponents of Islamofascism—though they may keep their joy to themselves because the result will certainly not be democratic.

Perhaps most interesting of all, it has been fashionable for some time, in advanced foreign-policy circles, to favor the march of democracy in Turkey, which many pretend is a more or less European nation because of its willingness to cooperate in Western alliances such as NATO. Awkwardly, the beneficiaries of this American and European benevolence are not quite what the neo-conservatives would have chosen. They are the Law and Justice Party (its Turkish initials are AK), whose leaders are Sunni Islamist militants.

But we are not supposed to mention this. The AK and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are invariably praised by mainstream media and Western politicians for their supposed moderation and economic competence. The competence is real, at least by comparison with those who have gone before, but the moderation is another matter. Turkish membership in the European Union—with the possibility of large subsidies and easier migration of Turkish workers—has long been dangled in front of the Turkish state as its reward for becoming more democratic and more in tune with the

human-rights culture of the EU. This process has for many years been a fashionable cause among advanced thinkers in Turkey, Europe, and the United States.

The same people emphatically deplore something sinister known as “the Deep State,” their term for the secular military Turkish establishment, which has several times overthrown democratic governments in modern Turkey—two of them merely incompetent and unpopular, one alarmingly anti-secular. The most recent of these—known as “the postmodern coup” because of its bloodlessness—took place just 13 years ago, when the Islamist government of Necmettin Erbakan was forced from office and his Welfare Party banned. Erdogan was then a member of that party, and his support for its cause led to his imprisonment. He has undoubtedly not forgotten, and it seems unlikely that he has forgiven.

One of the effects of the flirtation with the EU has been pressure on this Deep State to restrain itself. It is, in fact, the old Turkish military establishment set up by Mustafa Kemal 90 years ago, aimed at doing to Islam in Turkey pretty much what the neoconservatives would like to do to Islam everywhere—force it out of political life and make it subservient to a secular government. It was this force and power that kept Turkey on the side of the West during the Cold War and has since prevented it from slipping into the militant pro-Muslim camp in the Middle East. But its crude,

despotic methods cannot be maintained under the delicate rules of modern European democracy.

Kemal and Stalin are the only modern rulers who have subjugated militant political Islam, unveiled women, and controlled the mullahs. But their ferocity would be impossible now. If there is a middle way between such repression and the return of Turkey to its Muslim past, nobody has yet found it. If they do, it may be incompatible with the 21st-century belief in the goodness of democracy and the sanctity of human rights.

The message to the Turkish military is clear: any more putsches and the EU deal is off. This powerful restraint on the secular generals has greatly increased the confidence of Prime Minister Erdogan, who has several times faced down objections and mutterings from the military leadership. There is little doubt that, without EU intervention, the AK government would have been overthrown some time ago or so badly defeated that it would have been effectively powerless. It is an odd paradox: Western intervention in a secular Muslim state, leading to the weakening of the secular forces and the increasing power of an Islamist party, all in the name of democracy. It is more paradoxical still because the EU's love for Turkey has cooled, and it is beginning to dawn on Ankara's politicians that EU membership will never happen. This realization has probably come too late for the generals, now so weakened and isolated politically that they will find it very difficult to act against Erdogan. It has also given a new character to the Erdogan government, which has simultaneously been freed from two obstacles. The prime minister no longer needs to worry about a secular putsch or about wooing the non-Muslim West.

Thanks to this, we may be about to see Turkey undergo its most significant political shift since the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire in 1922. Having—or so it hopes—tamed the secular forces of the Deep State, and having abandoned hope of acceptance as a European nation, Erdogan's Turkey is looking elsewhere for friendship. And where might that be?

Erdogan may now be garlanded with Western praise as a “moderate,” but in 1998, he was imprisoned after famously reading in public a poem, much beloved of militant Muslims, containing the following passage: “The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers...” Since coming to power, he has greatly improved his country's relations with Syria and picked a loud quarrel with Israeli President Shimon Peres, disrupting what had been a rather close alliance between the Jewish state and Turkey. He has also been sidling toward a new friendship with the Iranian regime next door, just as the rigged re-election of President Ahmadinejad has disgusted all who had hoped for freedom in that Islamic Republic.

But most fascinating of all, and all but unnoticed in the West, is Turkey's internal shift—the extraordinary series of events known as the Ergenekon Affair. The word refers to a valley lost deep in the Altai Mountains, supposedly the origin of the Turkish nation, who were miraculously led out by a gray she-wolf. The story was for many years a favorite of secular nationalists seeking to replace Islam with a patriotic founding myth. But now it is supposed (a little like al-Qaeda, perhaps) to be the unifying name of a conspiracy of military officers, judges, journalists, professors, and reactionary political organizations. The alleged existence of this shadowy secularist spider's web has been the excuse for repeated waves of arrests, many of them at 4:30 in the morning, of prominent opponents of the Islamization of Turkey. Much of this activity was pre-

sumably a response to an attempt by the Constitutional Court to outlaw the AK party. This was the secular state's answer to the AK's efforts to overturn a ban on women wearing headscarves on state premises. This seemingly trivial change is immensely important in a country where outward signs of Muslim fervor were banned by Mustafa Kemal before World War II in his attempt to turn Turkey into a modern nation, with a legal system based on Switzerland's rather than on Sharia and with emancipated women. Now, after years of Muslim subjection, the newly militant Islamic movement sees its chance to re-establish power.

It is tempting to wonder if these events are not a slow-motion version of the Islamic revolution that engulfed Iran in 1979—except for one great difference: Iran was never as fervently Muslim a country as Turkey. While Iran is a largely secular state with an Islamic government, Turkey is the reverse, especially since the huge migration of devout rural Turks into the cities in the prosperous postwar years, particularly the megalopolis of Istanbul, so vast that it appears to stretch forever. A relaxed secularism was always popular in Iran, especially among the middle classes, and is stronger than ever after three decades of narrow theocracy.

But on a recent visit to Istanbul and Ankara during Ramadan, I was struck by the level of piety among almost everyone I met. The strictly observed fast was near universal. A senior journalist whom I interviewed would not even drink a glass of water while we talked. Many do not even swallow their own saliva. The streets, by late afternoon, were worryingly tense as the blood-sugar levels of tens of thousands of drivers who had been fasting since dawn fell and they became bad-tempered and accident-prone. The call to prayer, once all but banished from central Ankara, a modern

capital deliberately chosen to be far from the minarets of Istanbul, could be heard clearly at Mustafa Kemal's grandiose mausoleum, the chief shrine of Turkish secularism. Inch by inch, Kemal's secular state is being menaced into such weakness that it will be powerless to prevent whatever the AK party is planning next.

It would be absurd if it were not so serious. At one stage, an indictment against alleged Ergenekon conspirators claimed that they had met Dick Cheney to discuss overthrowing the Erdogan government. The plot was supposed to have created the conditions in which a military coup could take place. In recent weeks, similar claims have led to the arrests of several senior retired military commanders, accused of having planned a putsch, in a conspiracy of astonishing, almost childish crudity, back in 2003.

DEMOCRACY HAS IN FACT DONE WESTERN NATIONS FEW FAVORS IN RECENT YEARS. IT HAS NOT KEPT THEM FROM EMBARKING ON FOOLISH WARS. IT HAS NOT RESTRAINED THEM FROM SUICIDAL ECONOMIC BLUNDERS.

I am amazed that this extraordinary development in this important country has attracted so little attention. I can only conclude that the reason is that it is happening under the flag of democracy and that those who might normally be concerned are trying to convince themselves that Erdogan and his AK party are an Islamic version of Christian Democracy. Most of his enemies, after all, are not conventionally attractive—repressive state actors, secretive military men, reactionary judges, corrupt and incompetent old guard politicians. Perhaps the public relations are for once true and he really does intend no more than the creation of a mildly Islamist nation in which the *hijab* coexists with a free press, tol-

erance, and an open society. I doubt it. The process is likely to come to a crisis fairly soon, and then we shall know for certain.

But the real issue goes far deeper and rebounds on the democratic West. If our desire to establish democracy as the test of goodness succeeds, it is bound in some cases to lead to the creation of states we like even less than we liked them when they were despotic. Is it possible that we have misunderstood our own societies and wrongly thought that the exercise of majority rule through democratic vote was the key to their success?

Ever since I observed Russia's tragicomic transformation from corrupt Soviet state to corrupt gangster democracy, I have wondered if elections are really quite as liberating as we imagine. Long before that, I had noticed the curious status of Hong Kong, until 1997 a

British colony with the sketchiest makings of democracy. Yet, especially approached across its border with the Chinese People's Republic, Hong Kong seemed to have most of the characteristics of a Western society. Its press was free, its courts operated under law, its police were servants, not insolent overlords. Even now, some years after it became a "special administrative region" of China, travelers from Peking immediately feel a weight lift as the train passes the frontier at Lo Wu and everything is not merely cleaner, safer, and more modern, but more free. Yet it is much less democratic than Vladimir Putin's Russia or Iraq or Iran.

If we were to bottle the thing that

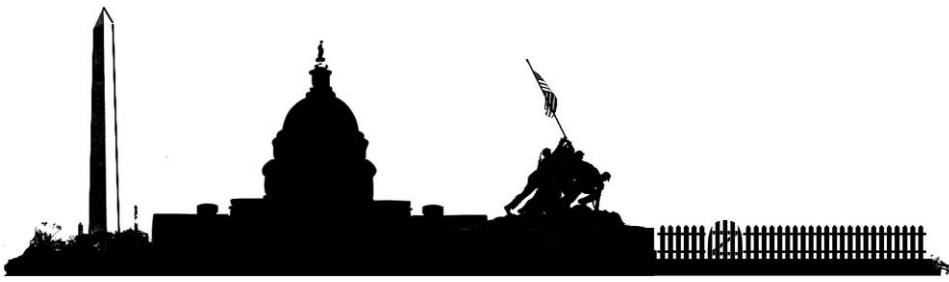
makes Hong Kong better than China, or which makes the countries of the Anglosphere so much more free and happy than almost any other territories on the globe, would it be the habit of holding regular elections? Or would it be something more elusive, harder to transport and more difficult to establish?

Democracy has in fact done Western nations few favors in recent years. It has not kept them from embarking on foolish wars. It has not restrained them from suicidal economic blunders. It has done little to empower the people's desire for less mass immigration or more effective schools. It has above all been feeble when called upon to defend established liberties. In fact, it has often been the enemy of those liberties, as demagogues have sought to win mass support for the excesses of Guantanamo, the reintroduction of torture, and the extension of intrusive surveillance.

It is the very liberties that democracy has recently helped to undermine that are the real spirit of the English-speaking free nations—*habeas corpus*, now hugely weakened; jury trial, the essential safeguard against arbitrary imprisonment by state power; freedom and pluralism of the press and media; the supremacy of law over power. As for democracy, it only defends freedom where it means that a government can be lawfully and peacefully removed at an election. If there is no opposition party ready to take over the government, if congresses are not adversarial, if parties engage in a private consensus and ignore the people's concerns, if major legislation can be imposed despite the wishes of parliaments and people by Supreme Courts or Human Rights Courts or by international bodies, democracy does not add up to much if what you really want is freedom.

It is striking that the war on terror has spoken so strongly about democracy

Continued on page 50



Mall of America

Nowhere in D.C. is as exposed as the National Mall. Inside the white-frosting museums are spaceships and a giant porcupine and a firetruck-red Calder hung from

the ceiling like playground equipment for alien children. But on the Mall itself, under the red eye of the white monument, the people look small and alone. The carousel calliope sounds tinny and far-off, fainter than the squealing of the gears. The triceratops has gone away to the Zoo—I used to slide down his tail. I don't think children are allowed to ride him now.

There's a noticeable dearth of iPods. A few joggers use the little earbuds to seal themselves off from the tourists and the beggars and the cultists selling knickknacks, but most of the people on the Mall lack that sonic bubble-wrap. Instead, we're treated to the music of the bucket drummers. These guys, with their make-do drum kits held up by repurposed traffic cones, are the opposite of the iPod. They're free, intentionally intrusive, icons of salvage and interdependence rather than consumer solitude. The tourists give them money; sometimes the locals pause.

An Amish family rides the escalators up from the subway entrance. A security guard suns himself on a bench. Four girls in school uniforms breeze by, arm in arm in arm like the joke about the octopus, then unknot themselves as they try to figure out where their museum has gone. Uniforms of one kind or another are as common as foldout maps. They make us easily legible to one another.

Trudge from the metro to the National Museum of the American Indian, and

you'll come to a raised wall with a conchita growing from it. The branches kink like a woman's hair, and in the spring the yellow-green pollen hangs in swaying tapers. A Jerusalem sage stretches out its arms. There are robins and a dove and frondy false cypress. Even this quiet, beautiful place must be made educational somehow, plaqued and paraded like all the other denizens of museum row. So here we learn that this piney creature, lying on its side, its needles flimsy but sharper than they look, is called "prostrate beauty." There's also a Lenten rose, named for its incongruous blooming season.

There are foreign plants here, tourists who can't get home, like the cherry blossoms for which the city is known. These too are labeled with their countries of origin, their passport stamps. There's a coral bark maple from Korea, with veiny red limbs like an anatomy chart. A tiny nest in the high branches lies open to the elements, since the maple hasn't come fully into leaf.

The museums have been rationalized. The giant squid, which used to be dumped in a murky vat to brood like Loki waiting for his revenge on the gods, has gone from squid couchant to squid rampant, and has a cool light-up display showing its beak and suckers. Even the National Museum of American History, once known as "America's attic" for its bizarre displays and rummage-sale aesthetic, has been reworked to teach approved narratives. I remember it for

its display case filled with weird things made from aluminum, from a fiddle to a lady's fan, and its hall of threshers. It seemed like a maze, like one of the old text-adventure games where even the most random object could turn out to be useful when you encountered a monster many screens later.

The museums may have been tamed, but the Mall still hosts emotions that can't be kept safely under glass. It's where we perform our ritualized dissent: placards waving, puppets nodding, a man dressed as Condoleezza Rice pretending to eat baby dolls spattered with red paint. These are carnivals of consolation, what we have instead of effective political representation. AIDS Quilt, March for Women's Lives, veterans protesting the war that claimed their friends' lives, women standing in a line with signs saying *I regret my abortion*—all those private griefs displayed for public purposes. At the March for Life we walked in procession toward the Supreme Court building, with drummers playing and banners snapping in the frigid air like something out of Kurosawa. The theatricality of these protests never salves the helplessness.

But the Mall is where we express our longings as well as our demands. We play out the yearning American restlessness, the dissatisfaction no policy change or cultural shift can ease. My favorite memory of the Mall is from the 2002 Fourth of July, when we were herded through the post-9/11 security cordon just in time to hear the big speakers play "Moon River." *Two drifters, off to see the world ...*

We gazed up at the dark streaky sky and waited for the fireworks. ■

Arts & Letters

EXHIBIT

Architect of the Republic

By Harry Mount

THERE'S ONLY ONE disappointment in the exceptional new show of 31 original Palladio drawings at the Morgan Library, only seen once before in the United States. It's the disappointment that comes with all architectural drawings: not being able to see the actual buildings.

If it's any consolation, the greatest American Palladian of them all, Thomas Jefferson, never saw a single Palladio building either. In 1787, he did a grand tour of northern Italy, visiting Turin, Milan, and Genoa, but he was recalled to his ambassador's job in Paris before he could get to Palladio's heartland, Venice, Vicenza, and the Veneto.

So the designs for Jefferson's Virginia home, Monticello, and his unrealized 1792 design for the White House were transmitted via paper only from Palladio's drawings and books. (Monticello's design and its name, which means "the little mountain," were both borrowed from Palladio's Villa Rotonda outside Vicenza.) That's why the drawings at the Morgan are particularly significant: they are the means by which northern Italian ideas became American stone.

No wonder Jefferson called Palladio's written works his Bible and, in his library at Monticello, he had two London editions of *The Architecture of A. Palladio* by Giacomo Leoni (1715-20

and 1742). His devotion was so great that in addition to the Palladian University of Virginia in Charlottesville and the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, Jefferson designed a second Palladian home at Poplar Forest in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1806. It has four octagonal rooms around a square top-lit parlor and porticos to north and south.

His quasi-religious devotion to the 16th-century Italian master was so great that Jefferson spent much of his fortune on Monticello. His building debts bankrupted the estate, consigning the house to a century of decay after his death in 1826.

But it's not just Jefferson who fell for the genius of Andrea Palladio. America, more than any other country on earth, is a Palladian nation.

At the time of independence, Palladianism was the fashionable architectural style. By the late 18th century, British and European Palladianism had reached full maturity, so the American incarnation could absorb all the aesthetic and pragmatic lessons of two centuries of Palladian buildings across the Atlantic.

It helped, too, that the Founding Fathers admired the Roman Republic, and so also admired the Roman architectural principles that lay at the heart of Palladio's buildings. The American love of Rome—or, more specifically, Roman Republican virtues—intensified with the birth of the American Republic after the Revolution. The Founders sought a virtuous model of government that could be separated from the monarchy they had just overthrown. The Roman Republic seemed at one and the same time pure, but not too dangerously democratic. Thomas Jefferson and the two John Adamses were particularly keen on the Greek and Roman idea of rule by

the *optimates*—the best or, in Jefferson's phrase, a "natural aristocracy" based on the most talented.

The fashion for all things Roman continued after the Revolution. George Washington's triumphs and celebrity eventually meant that the passion for Rome deviated from ardor for Republican Rome to a cult of Imperial Rome. The first president, who did his best to limit the powers of his office, did not encourage the cult, but he could do little to stop it. A bust of Washington in the Met, by Giuseppe Ceracchi, shows him dressed like a Roman emperor—a Hadrian or a Marcus Aurelius—with a toga pinned at his right shoulder by the traditional rosette brooch. He could hardly look more Roman or more imperial. Gone is the usual wig, replaced by the fashionably short hair of Roman emperors. His wide, strong torso and the incised eyes are recognizable from ancient Roman sculptures. All that's familiar from the famous Gilbert Stuart pictures are the lips, pursed with the pain of badly fitting false teeth.

But Washington and Jefferson's Roman ideals were most clearly manifested to the world in classical buildings. In 1791, Jefferson advised Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the architect who designed the grid and diamond plan for Washington, D.C. and remodeled New York's Federal Hall with its Doric portico, to follow classical designs for the Capitol: "I should prefer the adoption of some one of the models of antiquity, which have had the approbation of thousands of years." A handsome plaster model of the Capitol appears in the Morgan show alongside one of Monticello.

The only problem was, ancient Greek and Roman buildings weren't immedi-

ately practical in late 18th-century Washington. The solution was to borrow from the man who had already adapted classical buildings to suit modern living—Andrea Palladio.

The Founding Fathers appreciated the great Palladian buildings in Britain sponsored by the Whig aristocracy, not least Houghton Hall, Norfolk, the Palladian home of Robert Walpole, Britain's first prime minister. Jefferson in particular was much taken with the Whig Enlightenment ideals of political liberty and republican civic virtue.

It's no surprise, then, that all the iconic buildings of independence were Palladian. George Washington's Mount Vernon home is a classic mid-18th-century Palladian villa. The great imperial architect of Washington, Benjamin Latrobe, who adapted the plans for the Capitol, indulged his love of Palladio elsewhere across the country. He was behind the first Catholic cathedral in America, the Palladian Baltimore Basilica, and, in conjunction with James Hoban, the White House. (The White House, by the way, was built on the banks of a little stream given the grand—and distinctly Roman—name of Tiber Creek.)

There was more to it, though, than mere slavish copying of Palladio. Latrobe was a great one for Americanizing his classical influences, taking the Corinthian capital and inserting corn-cobs between the leaves. For the capitals of the columns of the vestibule and rotunda of the Senate wing of the Capitol, he removed acanthus leaves and replaced them with the leaves and flowers of the powerhouse crop of the American economy, the tobacco plant. But for all these flourishes, Palladio lay at the heart of his work.

Over the next century, Palladian taste migrated from these iconic buildings across Washington—and America. Jefferson, when he was secretary of state, insisted that Washington's federal buildings should be classical-cum-Palladian. The style then spread from federal to state level—from the grand, like the Massachusetts State House in Boston,

designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1795, to the smallest courthouses. Practically every town in New England has a church with that familiar combination of a classical spire soaring straight up from the apex of a pediment below. The first example of this combination is St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the church overlooking Trafalgar Square in London, designed in 1721 by James Gibbs, a British architect who straddled Palladianism and the Baroque. Jefferson's library at Monticello also included a copy of Gibbs's *Rules for Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture* (1732).

Palladio's own buildings—palaces, villas, churches, and even a block of four small domestic houses in Venice—enjoyed a range of size, cost, and function that was immensely adaptable to American conditions. Monticello and Mount Vernon were built very much on the same sociological and financial basis as Palladio's best-known buildings in the Veneto: rural villas in hot, marshy climates, attached to a farm and estate, owned by affluent landowners with political and business interests in the nearest city. The way Palladio dismembered the elements of antique buildings and rearranged them to suit a later age was also borrowed across America. He had studied ancient buildings in Rome and combed the works of the Roman architect Vitruvius (80-15 B.C.) to develop a style rooted in antiquity but not slavishly derivative of it. The Morgan show includes rare Palladio sketches of the Emperor Trajan's warehouses at Ostia, the Lateran Basilica in Rome, and Assisi's Temple of Minerva, all rich in elements that Palladio adapted for his own buildings.

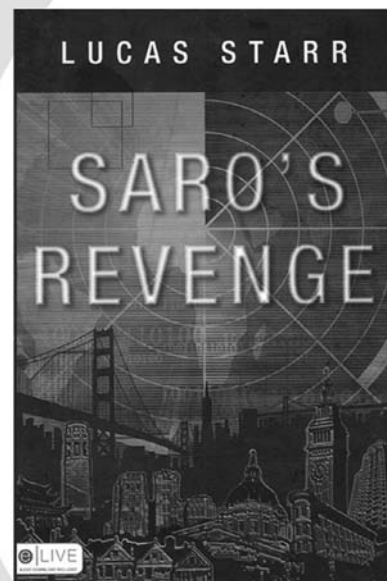
Infinitely flexible, Palladianism was the bridge from the classical language of architecture to its modern dialect—a bridge that stretched beyond 18th-century America into recent times. Late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings such as the Supreme Court—a model of which appears in the Morgan show—the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the New York Stock Exchange all borrowed heavily from Palladio.

Even modern minimalism has its Palladian roots. Le Corbusier, the Swiss-French minimalist pioneer, took a tour of Palladio's buildings in Vicenza and Venice in 1922 and filled an album. There's a fair degree of playful imagination in those sketches. One, of the Villa Rotonda, is drawn at a severe, raking angle, with the dome mutilated, one side of the building removed, and most of the classical elements stripped away.

Jefferson would not have approved of such sacrilege, but he would have appreciated how robust his hero's eternal principles are and how easily they can be reinvented, in any part of the world, by any architect. ■

Harry Mount is the author of Carpe Diem—Put a Little Latin in Your Life. Palladio and his Legacy—a Transatlantic Journey is at the Morgan Library and Museum, 225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street, New York, N.Y. from April 2 to Aug. 1.

Terrorists Control U.S. Senators, and the world trembles.



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BOOKS

[*The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, Diane Ravitch, Basic Books, 296 pages]

Is Our Children Learning?

By Peter Wood

IGNORANCE IS EASY. Left to themselves, most children do not become literate. They don't learn math. They don't drink in large amounts of history. Basic ideas about how the world works remain beyond their reach. And ignorant children grow up to be ignorant adults—provided they survive the sometimes perilous passage.

To combat this natural frailty, every group of people from time immemorial has organized some way to get the little ones—squirming, distracted, cranky, bored, breathless, or all at once—to pay attention. “This is rock worth chipping, and here's how to chip it.” “Eat the root, not the leaves.” Civilization eventually acquired a lot of knowledge that seemed worth preserving. To get the children ready for this intellectual inheritance, civilization invented schools. They are an artificial contrivance intended to do a more or less difficult thing: organize the brains of young primates to perform unnatural acts such as reading and long division.

That's my view as an anthropologist. Schooling is, inevitably, difficult—and more difficult for some children than for others. The difficulty is a mystery only if you begin with the assumption that children are just so bursting with curiosity that, absent some external check on their eagerness, they will take to the alphabet as readily as infants take to climbing and crawling. But we are

climbers and crawlers by nature and alphabet spelunkers only by outside intervention. When we learn to read, we are at one end of a long cultural rope that extends back though history beyond Shakespeare's Stratford Grammar School, past Aristotle troubling young Alexander, to whatever lessons were taught in the cuneiform academy for Sumer's scribes. Literacy has always been an achievement—and often a precarious one.

I mention this by way of coming alongside a book of groaning frustration by one of America's best-known advocates of school reform. Diane Ravitch first registered on the national scene as the co-author with Chester Finn of the 1987 study *What Do Our 17-Year Olds Know?* It reported on a history and literature test administered to a national sample of 8,000 students. That was 23 years ago—an eon in educational reform—but Ravitch's and Finn's lucid examination of their findings remains the gold standard for this sort of enterprise. Back in 1986, a good 92.1 percent of students could locate the Soviet Union on a map of Europe, and 65.8 percent could pick out France. Geography, however, was one of the students' strong suits. Only 57.3 percent could place World War I between 1900 and 1950. Some 40.2 percent recognized Walt Whitman as the author of *Leaves of Grass*.

Ravitch and Finn ended up recommending—no surprise here—that “all schools teach a solid core curriculum of history and literature to all students at every grade level.” They also called for better textbooks, improvements in teacher education, and other measures that would seem uncontroversial. Ravitch, who served as assistant secretary of education under President George H.W. Bush, went on to write other important books, including *Left Back* (2000), a history of school reform movements in the U.S., and *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* (2003), an evisceration of the textbook industry.

Her work *in toto* is a portrait of Amer-

ican schooling as a mighty engine of social assimilation pulling a trainload full of educational triviality. The school reform movements in the U.S. come off like the plot of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Who killed American education? Pretty much everyone aboard.

In her new book, Ravitch confesses that she, too, had her hands on the knife. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* belongs to that fascinating genre, the I-changed-my-mind-and-am-switching-sides manifesto. Ex-atheist Sir Anthony Flew gave us *There Is a God*; Anita Hill profiler David Brock self-profiled in *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative*. Quite a few contributors found their way into *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties*, and before them came the communists disenchanted by Stalin's gentle ways. Whittaker Chambers abjured his career as a Soviet agent to embrace both God and political freedom in *Witness*.

Ravitch's *volte-face* is less existential. She is now convinced that she erred about the means she pursued but not the goal. She continues to believe that the key to getting schooling right is a good substantive curriculum. But she has lost faith in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, pronounced “nickel-bee” by those in the trade) regime of “high-stakes testing.” She has decided that teachers' unions are a good thing because teachers best understand what students need and because organized teachers can best resist the often wrong-headed nostrums of giddy reformers. Ravitch, once an ardent proponent of vouchers and school choice and then of charter schools (school-choice lite), now favors public schools. She has deep doubts about the role of wealthy foundations such as Gates, Walton, and Broad in promoting school reform. She is above all disenchanted with the idea that schooling can be improved by treating it like a business and using business-based ideals of accountability.

Ravitch's new views don't unanchor her two core convictions: that American

public schools do a poor job and that we are capable of building a much more successful system of public education. Are we? Maybe. It depends on things that are not likely to be within the reach of reformers or elected officials. Children who grow up in intact traditional two-parent families generally far outperform other children in school. But as a society, we have more or less abandoned policies that discourage illegitimacy and divorce.

Children who have genuine aptitude for school learning thrive in settings where that aptitude is recognized and nurtured. But as a society, we have grown uncomfortable with “tracking” and other forms of intellectual distinction. Even Advanced Placement courses, which were one of the few public school nods to the academically talented, are now opening their doors to the not so talented. More than a quarter of graduating seniors last year took at least one AP exam—and 43 percent failed.

Most children take education seriously when they see that it has some urgency in the larger culture. In America today, no one feels particularly abashed by not knowing stuff. “Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?” asks the popular Fox TV show. “So what if I’m not?” is the implied answer. It is OK for adults not to know the difference between the Battle of Bunker Hill and the Battle of the Bulge. We know that’s just “book knowledge” and could Google it if we really needed to find out.

Mark Bauerlein struck this chord in *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (2008), but he may have been too generous to generations past. America has a long tradition of adult dumbness, or at least numbness to the kinds of knowledge that don’t bear directly on earning a buck. “History is more or less bunk,” Henry Ford told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1916. Our whole land-grant university system is laid on the foundations of a Civil War congressman, Justin Morrill of Vermont, who saw no need to teach the liberal arts. America’s most distinctive

contribution to philosophy is the get-to-the-bottom-line school called pragmatism. Huck Finn was not alone when he reflected on the prospect of being “civilized” by Aunt Sally and chose instead to “light out for the territory.”

If we chose to throw ourselves wholeheartedly into schooling, America might well do a much better job of it—but that is a highly unlikely choice for Americans to make. As a people, we are just not that interested in the tedious work of learning or teaching things that don’t appear to have direct application. We expect from schools more in the way of affirmation of popular conceits than the slow building up of knowledge. A great many Americans actually want schools that promote faddish ideologies, though, of course, dressed up as cutting-edge insights. Right now, one of the most popular teaching videos in the country is a crudely anti-capitalist, pro-sustainability video, *The Story of Stuff*. We want schools that promote equality, which

quently and report their progress, but individual states were free to establish their own standards. This became an invitation to aim low: you can’t miss when you are shooting at the ground. Schools also quickly figured out that the way to deal with a regime of testing was to establish their own counter-regime of “teach to the test.” Hence, as Ravitch and many before her have pointed out, schools across the country sacrificed a balanced curriculum and thoughtful pedagogy to concentrate on teaching students how to score well on multiple-choice exams in reading and math. Ravitch is especially deadly on the rank impossibility that NCLB supporters had to profess: that by 2014 all students in all schools will be “proficient in reading and mathematics.” Or else what?

Ravitch remains, as she has always been, a good advocate of her ideas. She is least convincing, however, in her newfound defense of teachers’ unions and her turnabout on charter schools, which

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has come to mean mingling as much as possible the talented with the untalented and the enthusiastic with the bored. We want diversity. We want creativity. But we have never been of a single mind whether we actually want education.

Ravitch offers some terrific chapters on school-reform efforts in New York City and San Diego. These alone make the book worth reading, for they dispel forever the idea that well-meaning businessmen with all the institutional freedom and funding they could dream of can actually make much of a dent in America’s educational lassitude. Ravitch’s critique of NCLB mostly hits home, too. President George W. Bush won support for his signature program by decoupling “standards” from content. States were required to test students fre-

she now sees as draining away the more talented and motivated students from public schools. They may well do that. But I don’t see a compelling case that the students should sacrifice their only opportunity to get a halfway decent education just to advance the cause of classroom equality with kids who don’t care, kids who lack ability, and kids who haven’t been able to surmount the disorganized homes and culturally impoverished backgrounds that life has dealt them. We do indeed need to help these kids, but a one-size-fits-all public-school system hardly seems the answer.

“Accountability” has been the watchword of a reform movement centered on the not implausible idea that at the root of school ineptitude are many teachers, principals, and other administrators who do poor work year in and year out

without ever facing significant professional consequences. They are protected by unions, by bureaucratic inertia, and by a school culture that fosters intellectual laziness. The accountability movement attempts to rescue schools from this miasma by rewarding teachers whose students excel and punishing those whose students don't. Ravitch's most dramatic reversal is her change of heart on accountability, which she now sees as essentially a business concept misapplied to schooling. Students are not products to be quality-controlled, and teaching cannot be stuffed into accountability formulas without destroying the fabric of education.

There is certainly something to this. The widget-factory approach of some accountability-inspired reformers is deeply unappealing. Moreover, schooling really is a distinctive human activity with its own logic. Conflating it with other institutions inevitably leads to confusion. But the accountability mavens with whom Ravitch now parts company do have some powerful points of their own. Our schools are chockfull of teachers who, as graduates of ed schools, possess thin knowledge of the subjects they teach, are hostile to the civilization they are supposed to transmit, and are steeped in the nonsense of progressive pedagogy. It was bad enough when this meant teachers earnestly believed children are natural-born dynamos of intellectual inquiry. These days it means something even worse: that teachers should be eagerly promoting race and gender politics and the claptrap of leftist "social justice." If accountability is a deadening doctrine in one sense, it is in the eyes of many Americans a way to constrain teachers from doing still worse. Ravitch is silent on this score.

Ravitch at several points smiles on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as the one great exception in an era of educational incompetence. In the 1990s, Massachusetts developed and implemented school curriculum frameworks that were far and away the most rigorous in the country and that vaulted the state to the top of national standards. I'll immod-

estly own that I played a small part in writing those frameworks. But it is more to my point that Massachusetts now has a governor elected with the support of the teachers' unions who is doing everything he can to compromise and eliminate that reform. At some level, Americans just can't stand to have excellent schools; when we get too close to having them, we come up with an excuse for undoing them. As Kipling reminds us, "The burnt fool's bandaged finger goes wobbling back to the fire."

It is not that we want to relax into a state of complete natural ignorance. We just value some things more than we value schooling. The reformers are to be honored for wanting to change the equation in favor of more people knowing more important stuff. Many of the reformers, as Ravitch shows, have blind spots. All of them underestimate the difficulty. Ravitch herself, I suspect, still does. But she has made a useful reality-based contribution to the conversation.

My own view is that America will never be as good at schooling as some other nations that are more profoundly attached to learning for its own sake and have the benefit of being proud rather than ashamed of their cultural inheritance. We would do better for ourselves if we chose to emphasize a little more the thrill of outstanding intellectual ability and a little less the solace of multiculturalism and leveling equality. We do breed a certain kind of exceptional student in our public schools—usually one who is ill at ease with the school itself and has by an early age diverged into lonely or geeky individualism. Our future scientists, inventors, entrepreneurs, and culture creators typically shape themselves against what the schools have to offer. I suspect we could do better by them—but then, we might have to give up some of that utopian dream in which all students can be proficient, and everybody gets to dance. ■

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[Shifting Superpowers: The New and Emerging Relationships Between the United States, China, and India, Martin Sieff, Cato Institute, 240 pages]

Rising in the East

By John O'Sullivan

WHEN INDIRA GANDHI seized unconstitutional power in India in 1975, declaring a state of emergency and arresting opposition MPs, Daniel Patrick Moynihan broke the sad news to President Gerald Ford with the following words: "Congratulations, Mr. President. You are now the leader of the world's largest democracy."

I have sometimes wondered how long it took Ford to grasp the joke, not because the president was particularly ill-informed but because India was *terra incognita* for most American politicians until the war on terror. As Martin Sieff recounts in this superb study of the shifting balance of power in Asia, since it gained independence in 1949, India has been for most of the time a regional superpower and yet almost invisible to Washington.

India's importance and regional impact are undeniable. India fought and won several wars with Pakistan, shaped the creation of a neighboring state in Bangladesh, intervened militarily (but unsuccessfully) in the Sri Lankan civil war, built a large and efficient navy, developed its own nuclear deterrent (aimed against Pakistan), and in general threw its weight around. Yet successive American administrations gave the country little attention and less affection.

Several strategic tendencies contributed to this bias. Both for good and ill, Washington was obsessed with China and how it might be either blocked or embraced for all of this period. American diplomats tended to exaggerate the value of Pakistan as an ally, having been

recruited early by the shrewd Pakistani military as its protection against Indian power. They were also positively affronted because India had forged a close and lasting alliance with the Soviet Union. And, finally, “realists” like Kissinger and Nixon were ideologically irritated by the neutralist and Third World attitudinizing of Pandit Nehru and his successors as Indian prime minister.

Such irritation is understandable. But realists are supposed to rise above such transient considerations as ideological rhetoric. Any realist analysis worthy of the name would have predicted an Indo-Soviet alliance as an almost inevitable accompaniment to the U.S.-Pakistan one. Besides, if the U.S. had wanted an Indo-U.S. axis, there was a perfectly good foundation for one lying unnoticed in the foreground. As Moynihan (who was, like J.K. Galbraith, both an American ambassador to New Delhi and an unillusioned friend of India) could have pointed out, after 1977 there was the democracy common to both countries. Indian democracy was restored in that year when Mrs. Gandhi risked and lost a general election. It is still thriving today.

Washington did not wake up to these possibilities until two related developments changed history: the collapse of the Soviet Union and, because socialist planning was among the ruins, the adoption of free-market economic reforms by successive Indian governments. President Clinton began a vigorous wooing of New Delhi in these newly favorable conditions. But it was not until 9/11 that a really strong courtship of India was launched by the Bush administration. This produced results both strategic and symbolic—a diplomatic alliance in the war on terror, Washington’s willingness to overlook India’s breach of rules against nuclear proliferation, joint maneuvers by the Indian and U.S. navies, their subsequent cooperation in aiding victims of the tsunami, and Indian opinion polls showing a higher approval rating for President Bush than he enjoyed anywhere else, including America.

These signified a real improvement in Indo-U.S. relations. They also led to

heady speculation about such prospects as “an Asian NATO” and a new special relationship between the two largest English-speaking countries in the world. Yet as I sat down to write this review, the news broke that Russia’s President Putin had concluded a successful visit to New Delhi with a series of diplomatic and commercial agreements under which Russia would sell, among other things, nuclear reactors, an aircraft carrier, and jet fighters. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh underscored Putin’s success by declaring Russia a “key pillar of our foreign policy and a valuable strategic partner.” And the headier notions of an Indo-American special relationship evaporated.

Some Western commentators attributed this reversal to the latest stage of American neglect. The U.S. administration has allowed other priorities—North Korea, resetting Russian relations, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.—to distract it from pursuing its nascent partnership with India. But a simpler explanation is that the Indo-Russian relationship was never abandoned. Russia may have been distracted by more pressing problems, but now that it has organized itself domestically, it is reviving its earlier links. And India is very content to resume a profitable friendship with a major power in the larger Asian neighborhood. Nor does New Delhi see any contradiction between its new and older alliances.

It is one of the many virtues of Sieff’s study that he foresaw this revival of Indo-Russian links and predicted that the Indo-U.S. relationship would continue happily enough but at a lower level of passion. He was able to get these things right because he asked himself a question: not the neurotic “What do they think of us?” so beloved of America’s masochistic political class but the more straightforward “What do they think of themselves?” One way of answering that question, as he does, is to study a map.

When Indians look at a map of Asia, they can see that their country is next door to China, Pakistan, and Russia, and

a mere missile-throwing distance from Iran and Afghanistan. India has fought three wars against Pakistan and is currently resisting a terrorist war in Kashmir that sections of the Pakistan military occasionally support. India suffered a humiliating incursion from China in 1961 in a small border war (which, Sieff argues in revisionist passages, had begun to be turned around when the Chinese suddenly halted and withdrew). And Japan—the last member of Asia’s four great powers—is relatively remote. So it makes perfect sense that New Delhi should forge an alliance with Russia—the one major land power in Asia that poses no direct threat—against such dangerous neighbors; that it should maintain cautious diplomatic friendships with Iran and Afghanistan; and that it should seek to remain on good terms with (i.e., appease) the growing economic and military might of China.

Of course, the U.S. is even more remote than Japan. And though it has the worldwide strategic mobility of a superpower, it also has worldwide commitments that might well distract it from being any real help in a crisis for India. Also—and since China poses the only potentially mortal threat to India, most importantly—the U.S. brings to the table its own potential crisis with China in the form of an alliance with Taiwan. India has neither reason nor intention to get involved in that imbroglio—and increasingly, as Sieff points out, the U.S. itself is determined not to be dragged into a conflict by Taiwanese actions over which it has too little control. Finally, America’s record of blowing hot and cold toward India over the last 40 years is hardly likely to inspire total trust in New Delhi.

From an Indian standpoint, the U.S. will probably be most useful as a counterweight to China in Asia’s balance of power—a maritime equivalent to Russia on land. A prudent American policy for India, therefore, would be to forge a defensive alliance with the U.S. but to exclude strictly any commitment that might bring it into accidental conflict with China, Russia, or any other power.

In other words, it must not repeat Britain and Germany's 1914 mistake of making commitments to other powers that then dragged them half-wittingly into war (or lesser conflicts). As it happens, and as Sieff approvingly points out, India seems to have decided on exactly this policy. The recent agreements with Russia are merely one more piece of evidence demonstrating the fact.

What Sieff also argues, however, is that this policy is right for the United States as well as for India. He fears that if the U.S. were to develop a strategic relationship with India of the kind that Nixon and Kissinger established with Mao, this would give today's China an incentive to build up its military. It would also worsen China's relations with both New Delhi and Washington. Though he does not quote the Tacitean line, he comes close to suggesting that

the warning motto for America should be "*capax imperii nisi imperasset.*" The U.S. should be available as a friend to all, but as an exclusive ally to none.

Yet the comparison with 1914 also suggests that as America's "unipolar moment" as the sole world superpower passes in Asia, so the continent begins to resemble the Europe of 1914. There are four great powers, some rising (India, China), some declining (Russia), some with local allies or rivals (Pakistan, Taiwan), all jostling for pre-eminence. This is a recipe for either a great game of diplomacy or a historical tragedy. If Sieff is right, the new Asian great powers seem to be acting more cautiously and sensibly than their European predecessors. That is fortunate, but it cannot be relied upon. And if the U.S. is to be the balancing factor in Asia, it will sometimes take sides despite its most pacific intentions. Is China likely to blunder into a row with Washington (or vice versa)?

Though this review has concentrated on Sieff's treatment of India—partly because India is less well-known than China to Americans—his analysis of China's policy and problems is also modestly optimistic. He comes close to arguing that the Chinese governing elite acts both internationally and domestically mainly from fear of instability and disorder. This is persuasive. And if it is correct too, the U.S. can work with Beijing to resolve most issues—but not all. Sieff is nervous of a conflict between China and the U.S. arising out of American support for democracy in Central Asia. But the pressure for democracy and human rights in the "Stans" comes mainly from below. All the U.S. and the West can do is to help its expression through public diplomacy and seek to protect it through regular diplomacy. And on that the U.S. and Western Europe see eye-to-eye. Not to protect human rights would be a diplomatic bridge too far—and one we are probably not capable of upholding in domestic debate. That is something.

What the U.S. can offer China and India is support for their national sover-

eignty against the transnational actors that want to replace it by global institutions. We saw the start of such an alliance at the Copenhagen climate change conference, where the U.S. joined an alliance of the new rising powers led by China against, among others, the European Union to defeat a massive extension of global regulation. As China and India become richer and enjoy using their sovereignty, the U.S. will find itself increasingly allied with them both on such issues. But Washington will usually find India easier to deal with than China, less because India is democratic than because it is an English-speaking country shaped in part by the same cultural preference for liberalism that shaped America. That will not overcome sharp differences of national interest; but it will make trust and compromise easier between Washington and New Delhi. To that degree India will always be a more amenable partner than China—but we can't very well force other countries to find us difficult.

Arnaud de Borchgrave told me, shortly before I joined him at United Press International, that Martin Sieff could write three serious foreign-policy analyses in the course of a normal working day. I soon found that this gravely underestimated Sieff's skills. The secret of his productivity was a deep scholarly knowledge of international politics and particular national histories. He didn't need to "do research" that week. He had long ago accumulated all the necessary research in the back of his head. His second secret was detachment: he could analyze any problem from a completely disinterested standpoint (and therefore from every standpoint). These skills are wonderfully present in this invaluable guide to America's future Asian strategy. The U.S. State Department should bulk order it; the Indian and Chinese embassies have probably already done so. ■

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[*The Roger Scruton Reader*,
edited by Mark Dooley,
Continuum, 232 pages]

Lamenting the Human Predicament

By Chandran Kukathas

THE AIR OF MELANCHOLY that Roger Scruton says imbues Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* also permeates this reader, which gives us more than a glimpse—but not a full picture—of the mind of one of the most insightful thinkers writing today. Compiled by Mark Dooley, the author of a recent study of Scruton's thought, it presents a portrait of a man who has spent a lifetime grappling with serious questions about art and education; marriage and sexuality; our responsibility for nature, animals in particular; politics, the state, religion, and culture; and above all, love. Such is the breadth of the philosopher's interests that much has been excluded. Still, a slim volume like this might bring Scruton's work to a larger readership—and more than 200-odd pages of melancholy might be too much for the ordinary reader to bear.

While this is a book brimming with observations and arguments, some surprising, many provocative, all engaging, the overwhelming sense is of sadness. Scruton is a conservative, and the business of a conservative is to strive—whether by advocacy or direct action—to conserve what is valuable but in danger of being forgotten, destroyed, or lost. This requires not only a willingness to defend the good but a proper understanding of what is good.

Scruton's conception of this cannot be reduced to a few phrases, but the main elements of his thinking can usefully be identified. One important good is nature. Here his view is not simply that the natural world, along with the plants and animals that dwell within it,

is worth preserving for its own sake, but that nature should be understood as an aspect of the world we inhabit, and an aspect to which we should be more attentive. To neglect or treat it with indifference would diminish us not merely because it might mean fewer landscapes to enjoy or plants and animals to delight in, but because it would amount to a kind of alienation of ourselves from one vital dimension of the world. Like Schelling, Hegel, and Holderlin before him, Scruton believes that nature is the whole of which we are part, and that our flourishing depends on having a proper relation to that whole. To be at home in the world, we have to care for the natural world.

The world of nature, in Scruton's understanding, is not, however, easily distinguished from the human world—the world of artifice. By now, culture and nature are in important ways intertwined. In part, this is because the natural world depends upon our efforts to conserve it, and therefore upon our judgments about what belongs to it. But it is also because our very perception of the world as “natural” is an artifact, shaped by religion, literature, art, and the modern media. We cannot attend to nature without also at once attending to culture. This is the other good whose conservation dominates Scruton's thought. If we are ever to be at home in the world, the preservation of our cultural inheritance is vitally important. But no less than with nature, this calls for judgment about what belongs in our culture and what ought to be jettisoned. That means making judgments about art, music, and literature, as well as about the institutions that govern our relations with one another. As a conservative, Scruton is wary, however, of making judgments grounded in nothing more than individual reason, though reasoning will always be required. Tradition and the store of knowledge it gives is, on the whole, a surer guide. It is the task of the conservative philosopher to make this clear.

Who, then, is Scruton taking on in his defense of conservatism? His most

important targets are radicals and liberals. Among the radicals, he counts those, like socialists of various stripes, who look to remake the world in accordance with an ideal, whether that be equality, social justice, the classless society, or a world in which domination and coercion have been eradicated. Part of his criticism is directed at the communists and their sympathizers, who were responsible for so much death and destruction in the 20th century. Theirs was an ideology that was as dismissive of traditional ways of life as it was ruthlessly destructive of the natural environment.

Nowadays, of course, the communists are an easy target, since few people will stand up to defend the records of the Soviet era's socialist experiments—though it bears noting that even when the Berlin Wall fell, there was no shortage of people prepared to make excuses for the failures of the various communist tyrannies. But Scruton targets a wider range of socialisms to include those that draw from the failure of communism not the lesson that the aspiration to create a new society is dangerous, but the conclusion that new ideals must be crafted and new methods of social transformation devised because what Eric Hobsbawm calls “the case against the present” remains compelling. Driven by the promise of escape from a tainted world, these radicals will lurch from scheme to crazy scheme.

Though he is less antipathetic to the liberals and their governing ideal of freedom, he is no less critical of their doctrine. This is because liberalism, whether in its egalitarian or libertarian guises, is suspicious of and even hostile to authority. It is, in the end, an individualist's perspective on the world. For Scruton, this is a perspective unable sufficiently to appreciate the nature of society as something more than an aggregation of individuals. It is therefore unmoved by Burke's understanding of society not as a compact among individuals in this generation but a relationship that encompasses the generations past and those yet to come. Liberals care

about liberty and equality, but for Scruton, only a philosophy devoted to a proper concern for the health of society can guide us truly. The better ideal here is love: of society, of nation, of home.

What are we to make of all this? As a libertarian liberal, whose sympathies lie mostly with Hayek among modern thinkers, I am tempted to respond that many of Scruton's conservative insights can be incorporated into a liberal worldview. The importance of traditional and local forms of knowledge I readily acknowledge; the danger of rationalism I think is plain to see, even if not easy to explain to social reformers. Yet it would be misleading not to recognize the real contrasts to which Scruton draws our attention. Liberals are not conservatives, and they are an especially long way from Scrutonian conservatism. What is distinctive about Scruton's brand of conservatism?

There is not the space for a comprehensive answer to this question, but it might be useful to contrast Scruton's philosophy with that of another distinguished English conservative, Michael Oakeshott. What both clearly share is an appreciation of tradition and an antipathy to rationalism. Though neither has been particularly religious, both have a keen sense of the importance of religion in society and in the development of European culture in particular. And each has placed an emphasis on seeing our engagement with one another in society not as a battle or a contest but as a conversation. Yet despite these sources of agreement, Oakeshott and Scruton have very different understandings of the human good. Here is Oakeshott on Hobbes in a passage I take to reflect Oakeshott's own philosophical

convictions: "Man is, by nature, the victim of solipsism; he is an *individua substantiva* distinguished by incommunicability." He is the member of "a race condemned to seek perfection in the flying moment and always in the one to come," whose "greatest need is freedom (not supplied by nature) from the distraction of illusion." Humans are not beings who will reach fulfillment by finding a place in the world, for in civil society there is neither fulfillment nor wisdom to discern fulfillment. They are, rather, creatures that must try to solve the difficult problem of detaching themselves from each other in a world in which all are interdependent.

Scruton's perspective on the human predicament is deeply at odds with this view. He is not Hobbes but Hegel, trying to understand how we can be at home in the world, and persuaded, ultimately, that this world has to be "loved for what it is."

Perusing *The Roger Scruton Reader*, one cannot help feeling that its author does not feel he has succeeded. The underlying sense is of the world-weariness of a philosopher who thinks he has something serious to say but has been neglected or purposely marginalized. In this case, he is undoubtedly right: Scruton is an unjustly neglected thinker. The solemn air of this compilation may or may not serve his cause well. That depends on whether the source of the melancholy is the thinker or the doctrine. ■

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Democracy

Continued from page 40

and had so little to say about liberty. This must partly be because the alleged war required a suspension, even abolition, of many of the rules of liberty and demanded a new relationship between the individual and the state—perfectly symbolized by the illogical persecution of airline passengers, a scheme whose chief purpose seems to be to accustom as many people as possible to a future in which they will spend more of their lives being ordered about by unquestionable state functionaries.

The other reasons are not so clear, but we are entitled to be a little suspicious. The main characteristics of the modern world seem to be an assault on national sovereignty combined with an increase in the power of states and of supranational agencies. Manipulated democracies, "color" revolutions—in which mob rule is rechristened "people power" because it does what we want it to—are a good way of interfering in sovereign nations without appearing to do so. The evisceration of our own liberties is easier if it is done under a democratic label and seems less significant if democracy is identified as the main safeguard of our rights.

Do those who have supported these processes really understand what they are doing or are they just homeless utopians, disappointed in all their previous longings for a better world, seduced by yet another false hope, unintentionally aiding the very cause they claim to be most deeply against? If this is the triumph of democracy, they can keep it. Liberty, far more than democracy, remains our most precious possession, and we would do well to make sure we still have enough of it to go around at home before we start trying to export it. ■

Peter Hitchens writes for the London Mail on Sunday. His latest book, The Rage Against God, will be published on May 1 by Zondervan.

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A Gem of a State

I am polybiblious—not, I hope, polybilious—in that I often read two books over the same period, alternating as the mood strikes. Seldom are they counterpoints or

complements; they are merely the cheerfully incongruous products of happenstance. During a recent week of travel, I paired Vardis Fisher, Idaho's gift to local color and regional history, with a whole lotta pages (*When Giants Walked the Earth*) on Led Zeppelin, a headachingly boring band I have never liked, not for a single godforsaken beat. (I did learn that Led Zeppelin's most interesting, if sinister, member, Aleister Crowley disciple Jimmy Page, votes Tory.)

Yesterday I broke up Willa Cather with a 1952 hockey novel for boys (*Scrubs on Skates*) written by Scott Young. I'd long wanted to read one of Young's YA novels. He is the father of Neil "There is a town in North Ontario" Young, provincial Canada's gift to American music. Scott's edifying tale is set in Winnipeg and references streets also mentioned in Randy Bachman's melancholic anthem of Manitoba (and its betrayal by talented sons), "Prairie Town."

You will note that the only obscure figure cited above is the one who stayed home: Vardis Fisher, who is known today, if at all, as the author of *Mountain Man*, source of one of Robert Redford's best films, "Jeremiah Johnson" (1972), scripted by the anarchist surfer John Milius.

Vardis didn't surf, but the apostate Mormon did play football (150-pound starting center for the University of Utah), tutor Wallace Stegner, novelize his place and his frontier forebears, and

compile a WPA guide to Idaho in the publication series that is the New Deal's best legacy. He also drove away most of his modest readership by producing a bizarre 12-book history of mankind called the *Testament of Man*. That's the thing about cranks: they can't help themselves.

Like so many American writers, Vardis Fisher hated FDR, despised the regimenting state, and proclaimed "a distaste for American graves in foreign fields, no matter how thick the poppies might be." (Project for a young Idahoan: track down and write up the political columns Fisher penned for the *Idaho Daily Statesman*, which sound like 180-proof Old Right.)

Fisher seems to have been almost a parody of the cantankerous libertarian/village atheist. He was "temperamental, obstinate, rude, ill-tempered, [and] tactless," his biographer Tim Woodward concedes. But he was a true son of Idaho, crotchety and strange yet pertinaciously loyal, and can you blame him for resenting that part-time resident Ernest Hemingway was feted as the Gem State's author?

Woodward quotes Fisher lamenting his neglect: "[I]f I had stayed in Manhattan and gone on teaching, and if I had learned to scratch some backs in New York and had cottoned up to some of those important people in the literary world—it would have been easy enough to do—and if I had slipped the word to them that I was saying good-bye to Idaho as Glenway Wescott said good-

bye to Wisconsin, and had agreed that it was a desolate land out there not only in regard to rainfall but also in regard to culture and everything else, and that it was very good to get back to the complex of culture in New York—with all that, my sales record and my review record would have improved. And I don't think that's rationalizing."

Maybe. But if you walk away from (or never join in the first place) the daisy chain, you can't complain when they forget your name. Home, however, is a different matter: healthy places remember. Tim Woodward tells me, "Our state falls all over itself to honor [Ezra] Pound, who left as an infant and never returned, and Hemingway, who came here primarily on vacations. Fisher, meanwhile, is pretty much ignored."

I am not much of a Fisher man, but then I have no private Idaho. If I did, I would beg this of my neighbors: Pull for Boise State football, but know that homegrown Idahoans make up just 20 percent of the Broncos' roster. Read Hemingway, but admit that flighty Mariel and model-suicide Margaux are the Idahoans, not their grandfather. Thank Sens. William Borah and Frank Church for fighting in their own ways to preserve the Republic, but deplore that not a single member of your congressional delegation—including Larry Craig, the Mr. Goodbar of the airport stall, just another of the numberless D.C. Republican closet cases—has the guts to vote against these damned wars.

What I am trying to say, Idaho, is shield your eyes against the coastal glare and look homeward, for there are rare and wild flowers pushing up from your untended graves. ■

Want to Have the Best Week of your Life?

Register today for one of Christendom College's exciting life-changing summer programs!



Sacred Music/Chant Program

Students who will be entering their junior or senior year of high school in the Fall of 2010 are invited to join Christendom College's Choir Director, Dr. Kurt Poterack, and guest lecturer, Fr. John Zuhlsdorf, for this inaugural Sacred Music and Gregorian Chant Program.

The program will involve learning to sing from the Catholic Church's treasury of Sacred Music, particularly the rudiments of singing and reading Gregorian chant notation, and will conclude with a sung Latin Mass.

One session (with a maximum of 20 students) will be held from **June 16–June 20** and will cost \$350. To register, go to www.christendom.edu and fill in the online registration form or contact the Admissions Office at 800.877.5456. Full payment is due at the time of registration. Registration deadline is one month prior to the beginning of the program.

Experience Christendom Program

Students who will be entering their senior year in high school in the Fall of 2010 are invited to join students from across America and around the world to take part in this life-changing summer program. Students will experience what life is like as a student at Christendom College. The academic life will be seamlessly joined to the spiritual, physical, moral, and recreational aspects of the Christendom educational experience.

Choose from four one-week sessions, each costing \$500 (limited financial assistance will be available on a first-come, first-served basis). 40 students will be accepted for each session.

Session 1: June 19–June 26 / Session 2: June 27–July 4

Session 3: July 10–July 17 / Session 4: July 18–July 24

Students will spend their mornings taking classes in Theology, Philosophy, Literature, and History in order to gain an appreciation for the liberal arts. After Mass, lunch, Benediction, and Rosary students will spend their afternoons and evenings enjoying a number of recreational, sporting, and social activities. They will enjoy canoeing on the Shenandoah River, hiking on Skyline Drive, swing and contra dancing, bowling, volleyball, participating in a talent show, eating a steak dinner at the Admissions Director's house, and going to an Irish Barn Dance at College President O'Donnell's house.



Latin Immersion Program

Interested in speaking and reading Latin, rather than simply translating Latin? Will you be a high school junior or senior in the Fall of 2010? Christendom College Classics Professor Dr. Mark Clark will guide you in deepening your ability to think and converse in Latin, using the same method that modern language immersion programs use, as well as the Latin teaching traditions of the Catholic Church.

Choose from two one-week sessions, each costing \$895. Prior knowledge of Latin is preferred, although not required. Students who have participated in a past session will receive a discounted price. Contact the Admissions office for details. **July 11–July 17 OR July 18–July 24.**

Besides studying Latin, students will also go on a hike on Skyline Drive, participate in recreational/athletic activities, take a trip into nearby Washington, DC, and spend quality time with the professors outside of the classroom. Space is limited to 25 students per session. Register online at www.christendom.edu. Registration deadline is one month prior to the beginning of each session.

Space is Limited. Register Online Today!

Christendom College ~ Front Royal, Virginia ~ 800.877.5456 ~ www.christendom.edu

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